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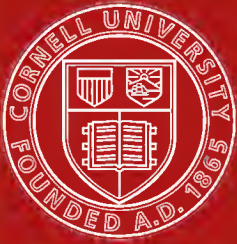
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Love letters of the bachelor poet, James



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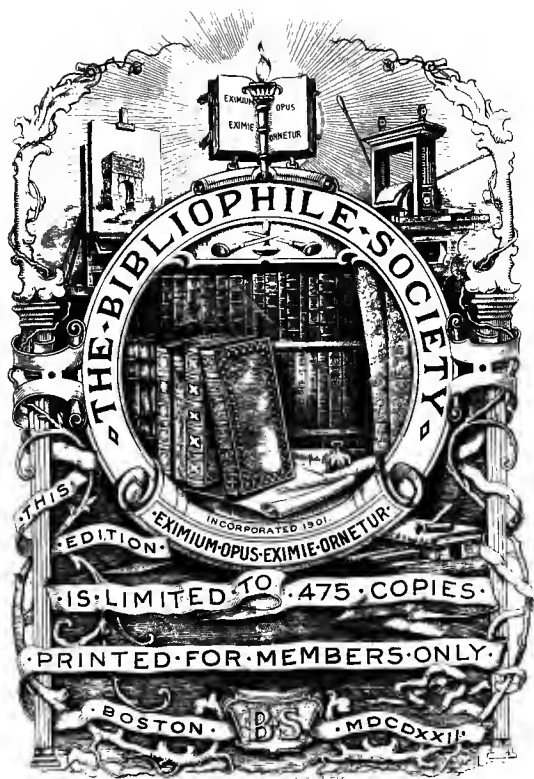


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**LOVE LETTERS OF THE BACHELOR
POET, JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY**





I send you the shadowy ghost of a face,
To haunt you forever with eyes
That look in your own with the keenest gaze
Affectionate art can give us —

And had they the power to sparkle and speak
In the language of smiles and of tears,
The rainbow of love would illumine the cheek
And banish the gloom that appeared —

LOVE LETTERS

OF

The portrait of Riley on the left is from a tintype taken in 1879. It was sent to Miss Elizabeth Kahle, accompanied by these verses, as shown in the facsimile:—

JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY

I send you the shadowy ghost of a face,
To haunt you forever with eyes
That look in your own with the tenderest grace
Affectionate art can devise.

MISS ELIZABETH KAHLE

And had they the power to sparkle and speak
In the language of smiles and of tears,
This rainbow of love would illumine the cheek
And banish the gloom that appears.

In his letter to Miss Kahle of October 10, 1879, Riley said:—

"And I write now simply to enclose a long-promised tintype, for it is not a likeness, as in spite of all attempts, my face refuses to be reproduced in even 'shadowy similitude.' The general contour of head and features, however, is exact, and the eyes are positively the best I have ever succeeded in getting. But this picture I intend to suppress as soon as I succeed in getting a successful photograph of the present Riley,—for now, as I told you, my face is a barren desert, with no oasis in the shape of a mustache to break its broad monotony of desolation, and I only send you this that you may hold it as a sort of hostage until my present and future self arrives; then you must return it."

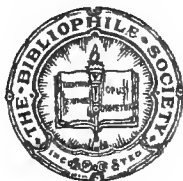
BOSTON — MCMXXII

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LOVE LETTERS
OF
THE BACHELOR POET
JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY

TO
MISS ELIZABETH KAHLE

NOW FIRST PRINTED FROM THE ORIGINALS
WITH NUMEROUS FACSIMILES



PRIVATELY PRINTED, EXCLUSIVELY FOR
MEMBERS OF
THE BIBLIOPHILE SOCIETY
BOSTON — MCMXXII

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FOREWORD

It has been observed that an author seldom appears at his best in writing love letters, for such tender missives do not generally arouse much enthusiasm in any one but the individual to whom they are addressed, — not excepting the author himself, who in the calmer moments of disenchantment is apt to marvel at his own unguarded effusiveness. The love letters of Robert Browning afford one of the rare exceptions to this rule, and the present group of letters written by James Whitcomb Riley to Miss Elizabeth Kahle, of New Brighton, Pa., are unquestionably the most noble — as they are also the most self-revealing — utterances that ever fell from his pen.

An author of either prose or verse may reveal but little of self in his published works, but in these unconventional autograph letters the popular American Poet discloses the innermost recesses of his

nature in a light that will greatly enhance the admiration of even his most devoted adherents. They will likewise be of almost equal interest to those who know their author only by name. In fact, had they been written by an unknown hand they would be no less entitled to a permanent place in our literature.

Although these letters were intended for no other eyes than those of the one to whom they were written, the bond of privacy has been loosed, since their recipient has voluntarily disposed of them with the full understanding that they are to be given to the world, and with the feeling that they will afford a better appreciation of the true character of their author. The correspondence having begun and continued for upwards of three years before they met, her profound and lasting regard for him was fostered largely by these intimate letters, and she desires now in her latter days that the medium through which she came so closely in touch with the human qualities of his heart and soul be imparted to others in order that they, too, may know and esteem

his personal traits, as they already know and admire the fruits of his genius.

Owing to the fact that the young lady was an entire stranger to Riley at the commencement, he felt it necessary at first to write much about himself, which happily he did. In one of the early letters — that of February 21, 1879 — he says: "I recognize the fact that you know nothing of my history, my character, social position and all that, — perhaps don't care to, yet I believe it a duty that I owe both to you and to myself at this juncture, to assure you of the fact that I am a young man and unmarried. I write sentimental verses occasionally, simply because I don't believe in love and am anxious to convince myself of my error, possibly — I don't know why else. I have many friends, but more enemies, and can scarcely tell which I most enjoy — for I really enjoy being hated by some people. I am cynical in a marked degree, and disagreeable at times, I most frankly admit. Socially I move in the best circles, — not, perhaps, because I was 'to the manor born,' but because— because— well, I recite dialectic

poems acceptably, sing comic songs and make funny faces, all of which seems to please everybody but myself, for when I *seem* the happiest is when I feel the most like crying — though there are times I could take the whole world in my arms, and love it as I would a great, fat, laughing baby with a bunch of jingling keys. . . .

“When at home (my home is like yours, as I guess, in one respect, — the mother isn’t there) — when at home I live mechanically, much like the house-plants — not so obtrusive perhaps, but quite as silent. I never speak — only to ask for more sugar for my coffee, or to say, ‘I’m too busy to waste time at the wood-pile — I’ll send a boy’ (for I have a step-mother, by the way, whose chief delight is in rasping matter-o’-fact ideas over my aesthetic sensibilities). ‘What is a home without a (step) Mother!’ — Give it up. So I stay here in my downtown room curled up like a wooley-worm, and, when at work, quite happy in spite of Fate, Misfortune, etc., etc.”

And of her letters to him he says: “Your letters, drifting out of the unknown and

eddy about me in this far-off land, come to me like truant whiffs of perfume from enchanted vales . . . When you write, tell me more about yourself. Do as I do, — talk of nothing but yourself.”

The five year period over which the correspondence extends was the most important of the Poet’s life, — beginning in the obscure days when he was struggling against adverse fates, and closing just as he was approaching the goal of his ambition. But whatever may be the rewards of Fame, neither happiness nor contentment appear to have been among her awards to our Hoosier Poet. For although most of the letters are of a hopeful and courageous tenor, in one of the last of the series, following one in which he writes enthusiastically of having returned home triumphant after having “conquered” the East, he says: “I am still meeting with more and more success, but that seems even more pitilessly pathetic than the old-time agony of effort and hunger for it. What is to become of it all I hardly care. I am only stoically waiting for the issue. . . . The beautiful vases

came, but one was broken — that one is me! The other is yourself, so it is very good to look upon, and I have brought it home, where all my best things are, together with your pictures — and they gladden all the gloom of the old home that needs them so.” And again, eighteen months later, — “Time seems utterly stagnant — and my life and all, and everything. I go about and I write some, but always I am very tired and blue and hopeless. The sun shines, but *I* don’t.” All of which may be compared to the feelings of one who climbs laboriously to some lofty mountain peak, only to find the summit barren, bleak and unsatisfying.

The discovery of these veritable human documents is the more opportune because no comprehensive Life of Riley has yet appeared, and however faithful any future biography may be it could scarcely be more revelatory than the contents of the present volume, which — apart from the interesting romance it brings to light — must therefore be regarded as a valuable accessory to his published works. They supply indubitable

proof of the source from which he derived the inspiration for many of his finest poems; they reveal a side of his nature but little known to his readers, and they contain withal a graphic account of his struggles, disappointments and successes in his slow but determined evolution from poverty and obscurity to affluence and fame. His established place in the foremost ranks of American poets is now universally acknowledged, and since his death the number of "Riley" collectors has steadily increased, until his manuscripts, letters and first editions are numbered among the coveted prizes of the auction room.

Throughout the years that Riley was in correspondence with Miss Kahle (who later became Mrs. Brunn) he sent her many newspaper and magazine clippings containing his poems and accounts of his work in literature and on the lecture platform. The letters contain numerous references to such items, and his correspondent states that she also received a great number of clippings, of which no mention was made in the letters. Many of these which she considered of

little or no importance were either lost or destroyed; but among the items that were preserved there is a poem which will be of much interest to the literary world. This poem, which does not appear to have been included in Riley's published works, was probably written in 1880, when he was on the editorial staff of the *Indianapolis Journal*, and was printed on a four-page leaflet (see facsimile), addressed as a "New Year's Greeting of the Carriers of the *Indianapolis Journal*." It is quite possible that the manuscript perished in the printing office after serving its purpose in the compositor's hands, and that Riley himself forgot about it in after years when his poems were first brought together and published in book form. Furthermore it is not at all likely that more than a very limited number of the leaflets were issued, and owing to the fact that the poem was unsigned, and the further fact that newspaper "carriers" are not usually gifted with the collector's instinct, it is doubtful if many copies were long preserved. — Indeed it may be that the one he sent to Miss Kahle is the only

NEW YEAR'S GREETING
OF THE
❖ Carriers ❖
OF THE
Indianapolis Daily Journal.

❖ 1881 ❖



IT was the night ere New Year's night,
And a poet sat in a dreary gloom,
Lit with a glimmer of anthracite,
That grimly gleamed in the cheerless room;
And a dim lamp winked in a dismal way
Back in the eyes, so weighed with care
That the tired lids drooped o'er the page that lay
Still untouched on the table there.

He had counted his teeth with his pencil tip
In a long vain search for a New Year's theme—
He had drummed the rubber against his lip,
And drowsed with the eyes that would not dream:
And over and over a thousand times
He had twirled the pencil to and fro,
And danced each end through a thousand rhymes
Used for a thousand times or so.

And he dashed it aside at last and said:
"It is as vain for a man to seek
A New Year's song in an old year's head,
As the rose of youth in an old man's cheek."



What remains for the minstrel's tongue
When his art has grown but a cheerless thing?
When his song is the same he has always sung,
What is there left for a man to sing?"

And lo! as he bent in a grief profound,
The table tipped, and the pencil rolled
Back in the hand that had dashed it down.
And a low voice spake in his ear, "Behold,
Rest shall come to the weary brain,
And on your eyes till the early dawn
Sleep shall dwell and oblivion reign—
While hand and pencil still write on."

And so he slept, or it seemed he slept,
But ever his shut eyes seemed aware
Of the pencil still in his fingers kept,
Scrawling rhymes o'er the pages there—
Scrawling, just of itself alone.
Quips and jingles of quaint design,
Such as never his mind had known,
Or thought invented, or could define.

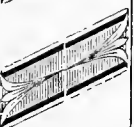
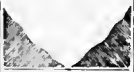
"And to start with, now," the pencil wrote,
"I will sing you a song of the olden days,
When the bard's cue powdered his crimson coat
As he read to the King his roundelays.
I will sing you a song of Christmas cheer
So old that the poet who writ the stave
Lies buried, hundreds of years from here,
Safe with his songs in an unknown grave!"

→SONG←

And it is a song for Christmas
Ye would have me sing this night,
While ye wassail steams on ye table,
And ye yule-fire crackles bright.

And it is a merry chanson,
Full heartsome and warm with cheer,
Whose echoes hid in ye rafters
Shall clap their hands to hear.

Then ho, for ye ^{twigs} ~~things~~ of holly,
And ho/ for ye sparkling wine,
And ho/ for ye chimes of Christmas times
In this jovial song of mine.



Ye kine may moo in ye stable,
And ye milkmaid blow her nails,
And ye milk home come with a frosty skum
Crusting ye milking pails.

Ye brook may leap from its laughter
To a silence of frozen foam,
And ye cock may crow not, fearing
To jostle his frozen comb.

But ho, we will sing by ye hearthstone,
Where ye yule-fire crackles bright,
A song of cheer for ye winter dear,
And ye hearts warm-housed to-night.

And what if ye chill December
Shall etch on ye window pane,
Miniature mountains and glaciers,
And gulphs of his bleak domain?

And ye stars in ye skies seem twinkling
In icicles of light,
And ye edge of ye wind cuts keener
Than ever ye sword-edge might?

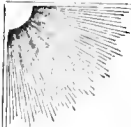
And ye footstep crunch in ye court-way,
And ye trough and ye cask go ping,
And ye china crack in ye pantry,
And ye cricket cease to sing?

Why, ho for ye twigs of holly,
And ho for ye sparkling wine,
And ho for ye chimes of Christmas times,
In this jovial song of mine?

And then, as though in a spasm of glee,
The pencil wriggled and writhed about,
And drew strange figures, and smilingly
Wrinkled their faces, and puffed them out;
And one, the form of a gray old man,
Caught at his long, thin beard and hair,
Blowing the way that his pathway ran,
And sang to the storm this mystic air:

THE OLD YEAR SPEAKS.

I am old, and my figure is shrunken
And palsied and weary and weak,



And I totter and reel as one drunken
Whose footsteps know not what they seek,
And my eyes, all so hollow and sunken,
Are rained full of tears as I speak.

'Twas a brief year ago, I remember—
I am sure but a brief year ago—
That I stood on the grave of December,
Where never a lily may blow:
And the heart of me burnt like an ember
In smoldering ashes of snow.



And the world—ah! the world it seemed waiting
To welcome me heir of it all,
With a thousand sweet voices relating
The legends of love, where the tall,
Stately evergreen's boughs were vibrating,
And holly-wreaths hung on the wall.

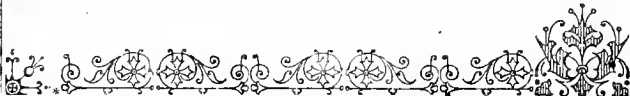
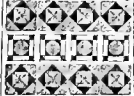
And I heard, as one might who is dreaming
Of melody, song upon song;
And I smiled back in eyes that were beaming
With rapture; and all the night long,
Low ripples of laughter came streaming
From hearts that knew never a wrong.

The clangor of bells was around me,
The ringing applause of the throng
That had lifted a shout as they found me,
And raised me, and bore me along,
And with garlands of roses had bound me,
And crowned me with roses of song.

* * * * *

I am old, now, though still I remember
My youth of a brief year ago;—
But again on the brink of December,
Where never a lily may blow,
I thank God there still burns an ember
Of faith in the ashes of snow!

So closed the song: and the pencil and
Its strange gyrations ceased and fell,
And the poet, waking, found his hand
Folded over the word "Farewell."



one that survived. On this copy he made several lead pencil corrections (most of his letters to her were written in lead pencil), chiefly in punctuation, though in one place he corrected what seems to have been a compositor's blunder in making the text read "*things* of holly" instead of "*twigs* of holly." Mrs. Brunn (*nee* Kahle) states that she distinctly remembers receiving this leaflet from Riley, and that although a great many other poems in the form of newspaper and magazine clippings were destroyed because she did not at that time "consider them worth saving," she placed this one among his letters because she particularly fancied it; — though she perhaps little dreamed what a precious item it was destined to become.

The ending of the correspondence gives rise to various deductions and conjectures, and it has therefore been deemed advisable to print the letters practically free from editorial comment. In this way each reader may enjoy the privilege of reading them just as Riley wrote them, and be free to draw such inferences as the letters,

either singly or collectively, may seem to warrant.

Mrs. Brunn says that after she had corresponded with Riley for about two years he made her several visits at New Brighton, and that when she received the last letter of the series she had been lately married, therefore she did not answer it, as it seemed improper to continue a correspondence with an unmarried man.

In a sworn statement which accompanies the letters, their former owner declares that they have been in her possession ever since she received them; that none of them have ever been published, and that not more than ten persons — mostly her family and close friends — have ever read the originals. The Bibliophile Society was indeed fortunate in acquiring possession of this treasure-trove, which was accomplished through the kind mediation of one of our members, Mr. John Needels Chester, of Pittsburgh, who procured them for us direct from their owner.

H. H. H.

**LOVE LETTERS OF THE BACHELOR
POET, JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY**

LOVE LETTERS OF THE BACHELOR POET, JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY

Greenfield, Ind.,
January 20, 1879.

"Sir," said I, "or Madam, truly your forgiveness
I implore!"*

L. D. Kahle: —

A few days since, I received by mail a graceful little poem in MS., addressed "To a Poet," and bearing the signature "L. D. Kahle, New Brighton, Penn."

As it came without letter or explanation, and as the name given is wholly unknown to me, I am at some loss to account for it; and I address you in the hope that "L. D. Kahle" is a reality, and will further favor me as intimated.

Of the poem, I take the liberty of saying that I like it, and think some touches it

*Riley quotes this appropriate line from the fourth stanza of Poe's "Raven," where the speaker addressed himself to an unknown visitor who came "tapping at his chamber door."

contains are simply exquisite. In style and finish it is new to me, and I must frankly add that there is something in it makes me like its unknown author; and should this reach that person it will require no unusual tension of that fancy to discover here enclosed the warmest pressure of my hand.

Very truly yours,

J. W. RILEY

Greenfield, Ind.,
January 29, 1879.

Miss L. D. Kahle —

Dear friend: —

Your letter comes to me like “A Thyng of Wytchenref,” — strange — mystical — mesmeric. I think we have known each other all our lives and never met till now, for even as you wrote, “I am an artist,”

“With inward vision my outward sight grew dim,

I knew the rhythmic secret of the spheres,
I caught the cadence, and a noble hymn
Swam swan-like in upon the gliding years.”

Greenfield, Ind. Jan. 29. '79.

Miss L. D. Baker--

Dear friend:

Your letter comes to me like "A Thing of Mystery", - strange-mystical-mesmeric. I think we have known each other all our lives and was in with till now - for even as you wrote "I am an artist,"

"With inward vision my outward sight I see,"

I knew the rhythmic secret of the sphere

I caught the cadence, and a noble hymn

Swam swan-like in upon the gliding years."

I was once stark, staring mad to be an artist, but unlike you. If I ever realized the small fraction of my dreams. -

"My crayon cupids reclining into shape
Betrayed my talents to design and - scrape -
- nothing more. So I leant my earl
in the corners like a pair of tongues
and gave my pictures to the poor -
determined that henceforward, like
little Tom Tucker, I would sing for

my "supper" - though at times I sadly
 fear that in running away from the
 thunder I have run into the lightning,
 for with good Chiapa I am left to
 exclaim, - "Hiss and a-lack-a-day! Poor
 was I born and poor as I remain
 wither mine nor lose. Thus I may
 through the world, half the time
 on foot, and the other half walking!"

As Miss Broughton would say, why
 did not you enclose in your letter
 a sketch of some bit of life or
 fancy? And may I ask, what is your
 present trend in art? The pensive
 I would guess. If so, I've a poem
 you must illustrate. It will make
 both our fortunes, its too wildly
 extravagant as it is, for the poetry
 old Public to comprehend, I can
 understand it, and could
 make the world - but will you?
 I am quite serious, and its a glori-
 ous theme for an artist. It is

(3) filled with most uncanny sprites
and eldritch things - unheard of won-
ders in undreamed-of lands, where
musical perfumes and odorous melodies
haunt all the winds, and blur the eyes
of night with drowsiness that never
sleeps, and drama that never ends -
Your pardon, but I do so like
to talk about the "grains of purple
ray serena" that drip like dew-
drops from my pen inspired!!!!

Yet with all this air of non-
chalance, let me be frank and
say that I am quite uneasy,
wondering as I write if you will
really smile where I would have
you, and fearing that you may
not find beneath it all the nobler
motive that inspires it. Be brief
in your judgment of me - if we
deed you give the matter any thought
the future shall restore the trust un-
tarnished as pure gold.

4)

Although you have called yourself
"a romantic girl," believe me, I do not
address you as such. That avowed,
coming as it does, I understand;
and to assure you how truly I do
understand it, and appreciate its
real value, I tell you. Truly,
~~that~~ I don't believe it. Roman-
tic things are good in art and
poetry, but a woman's heart
is worth them all; and such
a heart as that is yours
I am sure.

Your good words, spoken
of my poetry, have encour-
aged me to ask if I may
send you something in prose.
It will more than delight me
if you will, for then I may
find never courage to ask for
other specimens of your writings.

(5)

as well as the sketches, which I can assure you will be quite as highly appreciated. In return for them I hereby agree, to talk Holbein, Dürer, Hogarth, Rembrandt, Chiano Scuro etc. etc. the full "perspective" of my "fore-shortened" capabilities, picking out the same with such "subtle touches" of "light and shade," as this magic wand of Faber's can evoke.

Eagerly hoping to hear from you soon, and trusting you will indulge the hectic gaiety of my poor letter, I am, with all good wishes,

Your sincere friend,

J. W. Miller

P.S.

I have just received a letter that reminds me of a duty I yet owe you. This will require another page or two. Will you bear with me? This unhappy request may pain you, though not more than it will me as I give it utterance.

6)

Your little poem so pleased me
I showed it to a journalistic friend
while at Indianapolis the other day;
and influenced—not by vanity I
assure you, but by some indefinable
impulse I allowed him to retain
it for publication, modestly
suggesting a change of title for
our mutual sakes. And then in
ignorance most blissful I antici-
ped the denouement that was to
literally crush me, and in the
mean perhaps of wrenching me
from the grasp of your regard
for all time.

The day of doom arrived, and
in the coming storm of flogging
about to fall upon you, I leave
you to imagine my disturbed and
startled attitude to find the poem
published with the glowing caption;

(7) "My Palace of Pearl and Fire. --
— To J. W. Wiley, — "

With your name and address,
in full blazoned at the bottom.

Now spare me if you can.
I deserve to hang, however much
I prefer a life-sentence in the
close imprisonment of your
regard. In reality, I am not
wholly blameable. I admit my
disloyalty to the trust you so
graciously reposed in me, but
for the luckless manner in which
the poem was presented to the
public, the editor deserves our
utmost ire. And I wrote him
a letter of indignation, de-
manding in the name of all things
sacred what he meant by such
a liberty, to which he meekly
responded, that "The readers of

9) of The Herald would take more interest in it if they knew it was intended for anybody in particular, you know."

Forgive me I pray you in all contrition and sincerity. I believe you'd really pity me if you could look upon me as I sheepishly acknowledge all this. It's late at night, and I am all alone, and there's a mirror just across the room, but I wouldn't look into it, as I now feel, for a genuine 18. cent "Place of Pearl and Fire" as big as your Exposition building.

The only recompense in my power to offer you is a poem in response, which if it will in any way lay your vengeful feelings toward me - You may publish in all its inferior merit, that it

(9)
May rise up before the world,
and shake its gory locks
at me, and say I did it.

— MINE. —

AN EXTRAVAGANZA.

"Mine she is — of the whole world, mine!"

I knew you long and long before
God sprinkled stars upon the floor
Of Heaven, and swept this soul of mine
So far beyond the reach of thine.

Ever Day was born I saw your face
Hid in some starry hiding-place
Where our old moon was kneeling while
You lit its features with your smile.

I knew you while the Earth was yet
A baby — ere the helpless thing
Could cry, or crawl, or anything;

Nor ever will my soul forget
How drowsy Time, low murmuring
A lullaby above it, kept
A-nodding till he dozed, and slept,

(10)

And knew it not, till waking,
The Morning Stars began to sing;
I knew you even as the hands
Of angels set your sculptured form
Upon a pedestal of storm,
And lowered you to earth with strands
Of twisted lightning. And I heard
Your voice - ere you could speak a word
Of any but the Angel-tongue. —
I listened, and I heard you say, —
"Though Heaven saw our souls among
The worlds a million miles away
Each from the other, they will learn
Their tenderer nearer, day by day;
Till all the lands that intervene
Shall dwindle slowly, and the space
Shall see them vine-like interlace
Caringingly, and climb and twine
Up thalluses of summers-shine,
And bask above in bloom divine!"
And even as you spoke, a stream
Of some strange rapture over-ran

(11)

My laughing lips, and thus began
The unknown song that we call "Dreams."

Because her eyes were far too deep
And holy for a laugh to leap
Across the brink where sorrow tried
To drown within the amber tide,—
Because the loveness whose ripple kissed
The trembling lids through tender mist
Were glimmered with a radiant gleam
Because of this I called her "Dreams."

Because the roses growing wild
About her features when she smiled
Were ever drenched with tears that fell
With tenderness no tongue could tell,—
Because her lips might spill a kiss
That dripping in a world like this
Would tincture death's myrror-bitter stream
To sweetness.— so I called her "Dreams."

(12)

Because I could not understand
The magic touches of a hand
That seemed, beneath her change control,
To soothe the plumage of the soul,
And calm it till with folded wings
It half forgot its flutterings,
And nestled in her warm embrace
And trilled a song, and called her "Dream."

Because I saw her in a sleep
As desolate, and dark, and deep,
And fleeting as the empty night
That brings a vision of delight
To some poor convict as he lies
In slumber ere the day he dies—
Because she vanished like a gleam
Of Heaven do I call her "Dream."

WILLIAM

W. L. L.

Pardon paper and pencil - my writing
is bad enough at best - but with a pen, most
wretchedly atrocious -

I was once stark, staring mad to be an artist, but unlike yourself, I never realized the sweet fruition of my dreams.

“*My crayon cupids, reddening into shape,
Betrayed my talents to design and— scrape*”

— nothing more. So I leant my easel in the corner like a pair of tongues [tongs?] and gave my pictures to the *poor* — determined that henceforward, like little Tom Tucker, I would *sing* for my “supper” — though at times I sadly fear that in running away from the thunder, I have run into the lightning, for with good Chispa, I am left to exclaim, — “Alas and alack-a-day! Poor was I born, and poor do I remain. I neither win nor lose. Thus I wag through the world, half the time on foot, and the other half walking!”

As Miss Broughton would say, why *did not* you enclose in your letter a sketch of some bit of life or fancy? And may I ask, what is your peculiar trend in art? The fanciful, I would guess. If so, I’ve a poem you must illustrate. It will make both our fortunes. It’s too wildly extravagant, as it

is, for the pokey old public to comprehend. *You* would understand it, and could make the world, — but will you? I am quite serious, and it's a glorious theme for an artist. It is filled with most uncanny sprites and eldritch things — unheard-of wonders in undreamed-of lands, where musical perfumes and odorous melodies haunt all the winds, and blur the eyes of Night with drowsiness that never sleeps, and dreams that never end.* Your pardon, but I do so like to talk about the "Gems of purest ray serene" that drip like dew-drops from my pen inspired!!!!

Yet with all this air of nonchalance, let me be frank and say that I am quite uneasy, wondering as I write if you will really smile

*Mr. Charles W. Farnham, of St. Paul, Minn., has very kindly furnished the following note: "Riley undoubtedly refers here to a long poem which ordinarily occupies a volume by itself, and which is called 'The Flying Islands of the Night.' It contains much verse that is very musical and fanciful, some that is deliberately nonsensical. My own experience with it is, that you must take it in bits — not attempt to read the whole thing at a sitting or consecutively — though I may not do justice to it in this attitude. I had some conversation with Mr. Riley about it and he was pleased that I complimented certain parts of it; or, as he said, that I even noticed it at all, because 'most everybody else ignores it. It seems to be too extravagant and fanciful, and to have too much nonsense in it for any number of people to care anything about it.' "

where I would have you, and fearing that you may not find beneath it all the nobler motive that inspires it. Be lenient in your judgment of me — if indeed you give the matter any thought. The future shall restore the trust untarnished as pure gold.

Although you have called yourself “a romantic girl,” believe me, I do not address you as such. That avowal coming as it does, I understand; and to assure you how wholly I do understand it and appreciate it at real value, I tell you truly that I don’t believe it. Romantic things are good in Art and Poetry, but a *Woman’s* heart is worth them all, — and such a heart as that is yours, I am sure.

Your good words spoken of my poetry have encouraged me to ask if I may send you something in prose. It will more than delight me if you will, for then I may find newer courage to ask for other specimens of your writings, as well as the *sketches*, which I can assure you will be quite as highly appreciated. In return for them I hereby agree to talk Holbein, Dürer, Hogarth, Rembrandt, *Chiaro Scuro*, etc., &c, the full

“perspective” of my “fore-shortened” capabilities, “picking out” the same with such “subtle touches” of “light and shade” as this “magic wand” of Faber’s can evoke.

Earnestly hoping to hear from you soon, and trusting you will indulge the hectic gaiety of my poor letter, I am, with all good wishes,

Your sincere friend,

J. W. RILEY

P. S. — I have just received a letter that reminds me of a duty I yet owe you. This will require another page or two. Will you bear with me? This unhappy *sequel* may pain you, though not more than it will me as I give it utterance.

Your little poem so pleased me I showed it to a journalistic friend while at Indianapolis the other day; and influenced — not by *vanity* I assure you — but by some indefinable impulse, I allowed him to retain it for publication, modestly suggesting *a change of title* for our mutual sakes. And then in ignorance most blissful I awaited the *dénouement* that was to literally crush

me, and be the means perhaps of wrenching me from the grasp of your regard for all time.

The day of doom arrived, and in the coming state of frenzy now about to fall upon you, I leave you to imagine my perturbed and startled attitude to find the poem published with the glaring caption, —

MY PALACE OF PEARL AND FIRE

To J. W. RILEY

with your name and address in full blazoned at the bottom.*

Now spare me if you can. I deserve to hang, however much I prefer a life-sentence in the close imprisonment of your regard.

*Mrs. Brunn states that she first met Riley—when she was a girl of seventeen — at a literary society meeting in Springfield, Ohio, where he read some of his poems. She was only one of many to whom he was introduced in a perfunctory manner, and he did not remember her. She greatly admired him as a poet and an interpreter of poetry and after returning to her home in Pennsylvania she sent him a poem that she copied from a newspaper. The fact that she neglected to use quotation marks led him to suppose that she was the author of the verses. She says that the poem was written by Emma Alice Brown, “who lived and wrote in the early 50’s.” Mrs. Brunn can recall only the last stanza, which runs, —

Come up to my palace among the hills,
For a stately house is mine —
O’ come, my Poet, and drink with me
The Blood of Immortal Wine.

In reality, I am not wholly blamable. I admit my disloyalty to the trust you so graciously reposed in me, but for the luckless manner in which the poem was presented to the public the editor deserves our mutual ire. And I wrote him a letter of indignation, demanding in the name of all things sacred what he meant by such a liberty, to which he mockingly responded, that "The readers of *The Herald* would take more interest in it if they knew it was intended for anybody in particular, you know."

Forgive me, I pray you in all contrition and sincerity. I believe you'd really pity me if you could look upon me as I sheepishly acknowledge all this. It's late at night, and I am all alone, and there's a mirror just across the room, but I wouldn't look into it, as I now feel, for a genuine 18-carat "Palace of Pearl and Fire" as big as your Exposition Building.

The only recompense in my power to offer you is a poem in response, which — if it will in any way allay your vengeful feelings toward me — you may publish in

all its inferior merit, that it may rise up
before the world and shake its gory locks
at me and say I did it. —

MINE*

AN EXTRAVAGANZA

"Mine she is, — of the whole world mine!"

I knew you long and long before
God sprinkled stars upon the floor
Of Heaven, and swept this soul of mine
So far beyond the reach of thine.
Ere day was born I saw your face
Hid in some starry hiding-place
Where our old moon was kneeling while
You lit its features with your smile.
I knew you while the earth was yet
A baby— ere the helpless thing
Could cry, or crawl, or anything;
Nor ever will my soul forget
How drowsy Time, low murmuring
A lullaby above it, kept
A-nodding till he dozed, and slept,
And knew it not, till wakening,
The Morning Stars began to sing.
I knew you even as the hands
Of angels set your sculptured form
Upon a pedestal of storm,
And lowered you to earth with strands
Of twisted lightning. And I heard

*We are unable to find that the first thirty-nine lines of
this poem have ever been printed. — ED.

Your voice ere you could speak a word
Of any but the Angel-tongue.—
I listened and I heard you say,—
“Though Heaven sows our souls among
The worlds a million miles away
Each from the other, they will lean
Their tendrils nearer, day by day,
Till all the lands that intervene
Shall dwindle slowly, and the space
Shall see them vine-like interlace
Caressingly, and climb and twine
Up trellises of summer-shine,
And burst above in bloom divine!”
And even as you spake, a stream
Of some strange rapture over-ran
My laughing lips, and thus began
The unknown song that men call “Dream.”

Because her eyes were far too deep
And holy for a laugh to leap
Across the brink where sorrow tried
To drown within the amber tide,—
Because the looks whose ripple kissed
The trembling lids through tender mist
Were glamour'd with a radiant gleam—
Because of this I called her “Dream.”

Because the roses growing wild
About her features when she smiled
Were ever dewed with tears that fell
With tenderness no tongue could tell,—
Because her lips might spill a kiss,
That dripping in a world like this

Would tincture death's myrrh-bitter stream
To sweetness— so I called her "Dream."

Because I could not understand
The magic touches of a hand
That seemed, beneath her strange control,
To smoothe the plumage of the soul,
And calm it, till with folded wings
It half forgot its flutterings,
And nestled in her warm esteem
And trilled a song, and called her "Dream."

Because I saw her in a sleep
As desolate, and dark, and deep,
And fleeting as the empty night
That brings a vision of delight
To some poor convict as he lies
In slumber ere the day he dies—
Because she vanished like a gleam
Of Heaven do I call her "Dream."

J. W. RILEY

Pardon paper and pencil. My writing is
bad enough at best, but with a pen, most
wretchedly atrocious.

Greenfield, Ind.,
February 21, 1879.

Miss L. D. Kahle —

Dear friend: —

You were good enough to honor me some
weeks ago with a communication that elated

me to that degree of exuberant delight, I responded, forgetful of the fact that your letter contained nothing to warrant such a liberty on my part. I did more; I filled page after page with the lightest *pleasantries* — as I *then* thought, but *now* think — hearing nothing from you in return — have very probably been received by you with anything but that pleasure and kindly welcome I had dared to anticipate for them. Although guiltless of any motive but to give you pleasure, I can but find in my own thoughtlessness full cause for your being affronted at what has doubtless seemed to you pure impudence. Used as I am to all manner of rebuffs, in public and in private, I confess I have had nothing to so deeply pain me as the consideration that you have (naturally enough, perhaps) misinterpreted my real character in thinking me either frivolous, sentimental, or anything beneath the dignity of true manliness, or at least that aspiration. And yet I feel that my position with you now is such that I can offer nothing, either by way of extenuation or explanation, but that which would simply be to you further annoyance.

Mentally reviewing my former letters to find, if possible, wherein I could have undesignedly offended, I recall that portion relating to the publication of your poem, and my confession of the chagrin I felt *upon seeing it in print*. Possibly you may have misunderstood me there. The cause of my chagrin was to see it thus *publicly* appear *addressed to me, without your consent*, and the awkward and unjust position in which it might place us both. And with good cause, therefore, did I deplore this unfortunate fact, — for the following week, in the same paper, appeared a rythmical screed addressed to you by a literary Thugg of some local reputation, in which you were advised of the utter uselessness of inviting me to your “Palace of Pearl and Fire,” since my utter selfishness in the pursuit of fame wouldn’t permit me for an instant to bestow my attentions in any direction that might be of pleasure to a fellow-pilgrim, etc., etc. Nor was this all; the week following, appeared another screed from an evident admirer of mine, in which the “Thugg” is informed that “When *poets* are asked to tip

the flask of the blood of immortal wine, to *them* alone was the privilege known to accept or to decline" — or something like that — anyway, intimating that the "Thugg" was nothing but a "verse-carpenter," treasuring a malice toward "our poet" (that's me — O *fame*, where is thy sting?), for having publicly unveiled some of his prolific plagiaries, etc., etc., — and so the war goes on, and on — for I feel that the end is not yet — "and the burden laid upon me seems greater than I can bear."

As to the unfortunate cause of all this, I desire to say most truthfully that your poem made me very proud — I *was* proud of it, and *am* proud of it, and shall continue to be proud of it till you yourself object, and even in that instance I shall bury it away in some dark recess of my heart, and grope down there and like it all alone by myself.

I write this in the hope that you may believe me wholly sincere. If I have offended you in any way, may I hope for your forgiveness? I don't know why I so desire your good opinion, but I do desire it, — whether worthy of it or not, I cannot say;

however that may be, I would be delighted to know you cared enough to inquire, for in that instance I could then offer references which might be received by you with far more interest than any words of mine, — for I recognize the fact that you know nothing of my history, my character, social position and all that, — perhaps don't care to, yet I believe it a duty that I owe both to you and to myself at this juncture, to assure you of the fact that I am a young man and unmarried. I write sentimental verses occasionally, simply because I don't believe in love, and am anxious to convince myself of my error, possibly — I don't know why else.

I have many friends, but more enemies, and can scarcely tell which I most enjoy, for I really enjoy being hated by some people. I am cynical in a marked degree, and disagreeable at times, I most frankly admit. Socially, I move in the best circles, — not, perhaps, because I was “to the manor born,” but because— because—well, I recite dialectic poems acceptably, sing comic songs and make funny faces, all of which seems to please everybody but

myself, for when I *seem* the happiest is when I feel most like crying — though there are times I could take the whole world in my arms, and love it as I would a great, fat, laughing baby with a bunch of jingling keys.

Trusting you will recognize the truthfulness and earnestness of all that I have said, and hoping for such a response as I can but feel is due me in the very peculiar and uncomfortable position from which you alone can extricate me, I am,

Very respectfully yours,

J. W. RILEY

P. S. — This postscript will be a much happier one for me to write than my first, for I have just received your letter of date 15th, in which, as the old romance winds up, — “all has been explained.”

I am delighted beyond all words to find evidence of the fact that I have not been misinterpreted, and I thank you from the bottom of my heart for the frankness and confidence in which you have spoken. I shall certainly think none the less of you

because you really can't write poetry, while you write such truths. — As you intimate, it must, at such a time, have required extraordinary courage and magnanimity. To tell the fact about it, I believe I admire you more for this avowal than had you written in its stead the most majestic sonnet.

Though my former explanation, etc., will be now of little value, I send it, hoping you will find in it, scattered here and there, scraps of my better-self, and because I am about leaving home for some business engagements and have much hard work before me. Yet I can most truthfully assure you, I will go with a much lighter heart, having heard from you so pleasurably.

Have you the faculty — though of course you have — of *seeing* even what is but vaguely described to you? I have, and in consequence I see you and your little old father living away out there all alone by yourselves like the Mr. *Twomeleys* (is that the name?) and his father in *Great Expectations*, and living just as happily. It is monotonous, of course; yet you are brave, I guess, and anchored in that sweet belief

that some kind power has us in keeping —
ever ripening on and on to some glad end.

Shall I tell you how it seems to me you
are? — or rather how I like to fancy it?
Well, you're the little girl I read of in a poem
the other day; she was alone — so all alone,
the world grew as a blank to her; for, in a
dream, she dwelt among loved unlovely
things, and yet "She dared not stay — she
dared not go," until at last "beneath her
feet a satin floor of white and blush and
crimson roses sprung — and on this bridge
of bloom she ran and sung, — and so came
unto the South —

*And there she sleeps within a folded rose,
Dreaming there is a power rocking the stem
That sees all helpless souls and mothers
them."*

And that's the way I shall picture you in
preference to thinking of bleak hillsides, and
a gaunt old house, perched all alone there,
with great staring windows, glaring ever
and in vain for something animate, forgetful
even of the sad-eyed girl that sits within
bent ever over her needlework, and —

*"Shaping from her bitter thought
Heartsease and forgetmenot."*

O, you should see what I endure! When at *home* (my *home* is like yours, as I guess, in one respect, — the mother isn't there)—when at home I live mechanically, much like the house-plants — not so obtrusive perhaps, but quite as silent. I never speak, only to ask for more sugar for my coffee, or to say, "I'm too busy to waste time at the wood-pile — I'll send a boy" (for I've a *step-mother*, by the way, whose chief delight is in rasping matter-o'-fact ideas over my aesthetic sensibilities). "What is home without a (step) Mother!" Give it up. So I stay here in my down-town room curled up like a wooley-worm, and when at work, quite happy in spite of Fate, Misfortune, etc., etc.

My time is most delightfully diversified however, by occasional calls from different parts of the state to lecture, and since I've made this confession, I must admit that I've as strong an ambition in that peculiar field as in literature. Glad, too, to be able to say that I'm succeeding there beyond even my vainest expectations — but I'm running on beyond the limits of my time, or your

interest, I am sure. You will write me, — will you? — at your very earliest convenience. I like your letters, and shall await the next with more impatience than the last even, if such a thing could be possible.

I earnestly hope the acquaintance begun under such peculiar and harassing circumstances will eventuate, after all, as happily as I desire, for in that instance the world will have in us the noblest artist, and the *gladdest* poet that ever twanged a string.

Very truly yours,

J. W. RILEY

Greenfield, Ind.,

March 15, 1879.

Dear friend: —

Yes, I meant “Wemmick”* and “The Aged,” and I’m glad to get your good letter — for I’ve been from home for a week or two, and am tired — tired — tired; and your letter is the one oasis of that pilgrimage. Your picture of home is not at all unlovely — I like it, and I envy your great

*Instead of “Mr. Twomeleys” in *Great Expectations*. See postscript to letter of February 21st.

depth of tranquility and rest. It's like a prayer — hushed, holy and so full of gracious peace I feel like kneeling as I read.

Your letters do me good — they are so different from my flighty “Crinkum-crank-ums” — they seem like— like a deserved yet unintentional rebuke, and so I welcome them most warmly.

I have a fear, however, that *will* haunt me, i.e., that I am simply an intrusion on your better time. Forgive me if I am, for knowingly I would not vex you, and am “more glad than words can say” that you have pardoned me for so unwittingly occasioning you the “sleepless hours” you speak of over the publication of the lines “To a Poet” — which, by the way, is still of interest to me, and in your next will you tell me, please, the real author?

All comment regarding it has died away, and there will be no further comment, rest assured.

I take the liberty of sending you by this mail an old poem of mine that was the occasion of more worry to me than ever could have been your “Palace of Pearl and Fire.”

Perhaps you may have heard something of it, yet fearful you have not, and desiring that you may fully understand it, I will briefly outline its history.

About two years ago, in conversation with a friend, I ventured the assertion that poetry, to be popular, didn't require positive worth; if it were the production of an *author known to fame*, that of itself was sufficient to insure its success. My friend took the opposite ground and argued so positively against my theory, that I determined to convince [him] of his error if in any way possible; and beating about for a means of proof, I hit upon the idea of vaguely imitating some dead author, and then fabricating a story to correspond with the supposed discovery of "his" poem, lay them both before the public. This project I perfected and carried out, selecting Poe* as the helpless victim of my heinous design. The poem, "Leonainie" was the result, and it is not vanity in me to say that the ruse worked so successfully scarcely a journal within the

*By a singular coincidence, Poe died on the same day that Riley was born.

boundaries of the United States failed to reproduce it. Among the more notable, William Cullen Bryant's "Saturday Post," while Poe's latest, and, I guess, best, biographer, Wm. F. Gill, of Boston, wrote for the "orig." MS. copy which we (the editor who gave it first to the public, and myself) claimed was in our possession. — This latter fact occasioning the exposé of our fraud, for it had grown serious, you see, and we were in a manner forced to come to the surface, or *a-la* "Truthful James," "rise and explain." This we did, but as the grand majority had bitten at the tempting literary morsel of deceit, the irate press "went for us then and thar," and for your humble servant with an especial intensity of vituperation and exhaustless abuse; and it was some months before I dared cheep a line of poetry without being reviled beyond measure. I can smile over it now, but then it *was really very, very serious*.

Well, this poem has been set to music (by some fiend evidently who desires to perpetuate that unholy fraud of mine) and I have just received a copy of it and send it,

hoping, after all, it will prove a passing pleasure to you, dear friend. I regret to note, however, that one verse of the poem has been omitted in the musical arrangement, as it makes still more obscure the real meaning of the poem.*

Trusting you will still continue to favor me, as your time and pleasure may allow, and hoping, too, that you will recognize the real interest I find in your good letters, I am,

Truly and gratefully

Your friend,

J. W. RILEY

LEONAINIE

Leonainie— Angels named her;
And they took the light
Of the laughing stars and framed her
In a smile of white;
And they made her hair of gloomy
Midnight, and her eyes of bloomy
Moonshine, and they brought her to me
In the solemn night.

In a solemn night of summer,
When my heart of gloom

*The poem, including the missing stanza, is given on this and the next page.

Blossomed up to greet the comer
Like a rose in bloom;
All forebodings that distressed me
I forgot as joy caressed me —
(Lying joy! that caught and pressed me
In the arms of doom!)

Only spake the little lisper
In the Angel-tongue;
Yet I, listening, heard her whisper, —
“Songs are only sung
Here below that they may grieve you, —
Tales but told you to deceive you, —
So must Leonainie leave you
While her love is young.”

Then God smiled and it was morning,
Matchless and supreme,
Heaven's glory seemed adorning
Earth with its esteem;
Every heart but mine seemed gifted
With the voice of prayer, and lifted
Where my Leonainie drifted
From me like a dream.

Greenfield, Ind.,
April 11, 1879.

Miss Kahle —

Dear friend: —

More than a month has flashed away
since the receipt of your last letter. I would
have written long ere this, but for the gentle

intimation that I need display no promptness at all — which meant, I sadly, sadly fear, that my letters are of value the most nominal in your esteem — Ho! ho! But you shall not find me so easily eluded. I will bide my time. I will “possess my soul in patience.” I will hide me low adown among the dim, dark shadows of your life, and as you journey on, forgetful of all else but art and fame, I will leap up before you like some monstrously-distorted “Jack-in-the-box,” and I will chortle with uncanny glee, — “Ho! ho! All things come round to him who will but wait!”

But we *are* good friends, “ain’t us”? as Joe Gasgery would say. And your letters, drifting out of the unknown and eddying about me in this far-off land, come to me like truant whiffs of perfume from enchanted vales. There! how’s that? — but I mean it — every word, and more, too — for the world I know and deal with is a wrangling, jangling, slip-shod old concern that rattles as it rolls along the road of Time, and the noise of it sinks low and dies away, and I am soothed and thankful when your

letters come. You are very good to me, and you must know that I appreciate and like you better every woman's-word you write.

And you're at work again. Is there anything better than work? I have never found [it]. Sometimes I lose the way of it, and grow idle — then morose and sullen, disagreeable — and at last most wretchedly unhappy. I am very busy now, and very happy. I am always happy when at work, and never wholly so even when necessarily idle — no, not even when I dance, laugh, sing or anything. — “For fear ye die tomorrow let today pass by flower-crowned and singing,” is advice I never could accept, — for if I knew I would die tomorrow I would occupy the day preceding that very notable event in labor — not in laughs.

I *did* mean “Wemmick” in *Great Expectations*, and your correction, together with the home scenes as they actually exist, I enjoyed beyond measure. You say you *cannot write*. I say you *can*; and I *know*; for I've been an *editor* — think of that! And when you write again, you must tell me

more and more of home, your father, your work, everything.

And sometime I want you — for *my* sake, since you declare yourself my friend — to write a poem. You can, and you must. I shall accept no excuse.

Just now I'm a raving lunatic on the sonnet topic. Here is one of Christina Rossetti's. To use her own chaste words, "And very sweet it is: —"

AFTER DEATH*

"The curtains were half drawn, the floor was swept

And strewn with rushes; rosemary and may
Lay thick upon the bed on which I lay,
Where through the lattice ivy-shadows crept.
He leaned above me, thinking that I slept
And could not hear him; but I heard him say
"Poor child! poor child!" and as he turned
away

Came a deep silence, and I knew he wept.

He did not touch the shroud, or raise the fold
That hid my face, or take my hand in his,
Or ruffle the smooth pillows for my head.

He did not love me living; but once dead
He pitied me, and very sweet it is

To know he still is warm though I am cold."

*This sonnet and the one following appear in the body of the letter, in Riley's handwriting.

(4)

And here's one by your modest friend - not
by any means so excellent as the one just
quoted, but he wrote it, and he wants
you to read it.

J. V. E.

—

O queenly month of indolent repose!

I drink thy breath in sips of rare perfume.

As in the downy lap of clover bloom
I nestle like a drowsy child, and doze
The lazy hours away. The zephyrs throw

The stifling shuttle of the summer's noon,

And weaves a damask-work of gleam and gloom

Before thy listless feet; The lily blows

A bugle call of fragrance, o'er the glade,

And, wheeling into ranks with plume and spear,

Thy harvest-armies gather on the field;

While faint, and far away, yet pure and clear,

A voice calls out of alien lands of shade, -

"All hail the peerless Goddess of the Year!"

—

I will also enclose with this a recent sketch
in prose. Nothing ambitious - nothing vigorous -
You would term it, and I would be greatly
pleased if you did, - "A quiet bit of color" -
nothing more.

And here's one by your modest friend —
not by any means so excellent as the one
just quoted, but he wrote it, and he wants
you to read it.

JUNE

O queenly month of indolent repose!
I drink thy breath in sips of rare perfume,
As in thy downy lap of clover-bloom
I nestle like a drowsy child, and doze
The lazy hours away. The zephyr throws
The shifting shuttle of the Summer's loom,
And weaves a damask-work of gleam and
gloom
Before thy listless feet; The lily blows
A bugle-call of fragrance o'er the glade,
And, wheeling into ranks with plume and
spear,
Thy harvest-armies gather on parade;
While faint and far away, yet pure and clear,
A voice calls out of alien lands of shade, —
"All hail the peerless goddess of the year!"

I will also enclose with this a recent sketch
in prose.* Nothing ambitious — nothing
vigorous. You would term it — and I

* "The *prose* mentioned in the next to last paragraph of
letter of April 11th, 1879, I did not consider of any conse-
quence, for I do not recall it and it is not at this date in my
possession, nor do I know of its whereabouts." — Signed
statement by Elizabeth Brunn, *nee* Kahle.

would be greatly pleased if you did — “A quiet bit of color” — nothing more.

And now, when may I hope to hear from you again? Write me when you can — if at once, I shall be all the more delighted, but if not, I will conform my desire with your own good time, and remain as faithfully yours as now.

Truly your friend,

J. W. RILEY

Greenfield, Ind.,

May 6, 1879.

My dear friend: —

First, I must tell you truthfully that it has not been through *neglect* that I have not written in answer to your last good letter sooner. (And your last letter is “*better, better, better* than anything on earth” — only the quotation proper is “*sweeter, sweeter, sweeter*” — but I’m afraid to say that, having never, but in fancy, seen your woman-face, or caught and wrung your two kind hands.)

I need not enter into any detail as to reason of my silence, and yet I do want you to know that I have been worried, fretted, vexed, and “wooled” around the last few weeks most pitilessly. Business for one thing — what little business I have to employ my mind — has been slowly slipping and sliding beyond my reach, though by an almost superhuman effort I’ve enough left to fatten my ambition in that line — for if I might have my way I’d have nothing to do with matter-of-fact affairs in any way.

You’ve heard of Job’s Turkey, of course (wonder if it was a Thanksgiving Turkey!). Well, in a financial aspect, I am left about as poor as that — only I’m a very patient and contented fowl, and so long as I’m not too poor to “gobble” I shall count myself extremely opulent. At least I shall *say* so, and how are you to know, so far away, but that I’m just as happy as I profess to be!

The reference to your brother — his leaving you for the world — his return home, and then his death — told me that you had, and have, a brave, good heart, and made me like you even better than before. For even

now as I write, a brother — older than myself — is lying very seriously ill. This is one of my present troubles. John is his name, mine's Jim. My life has been just what the name suggests; John's life has been only good. He always had his lessons at school, and was never whipped either by the teacher or father — while *I* — why, I went about with welts running over and around me, like a rhinoceros' hide. O I was a calloused little wretch, both outwardly and in, and was never so happy as when breaking rules.

But John was good, and is good, and though you say you like bad boys best, you couldn't help loving John, for he wasn't the *insipid* good little boy of the Sunday-school books. Besides, you *must* like him, because if it hadn't been for John I'd never have been fit to write one word to *you*, or any one so good, nor would any one have cared to hear from one so low — so lost. And if John should die there would be no one left whose praise could be quite so much as his is to me. He praises every line that has a moral worth, and every sentiment that

speaks out for the poor. John was the first to believe in me, and if he lives I know I will be better every day. I am selfish — very selfish — but I would rather die here at these words than to know that he had left me.

The world is such a great wide ache of emptiness without some one you *know* is wholly true, and though one writes and writes till all who read applaud, how much more lovable is he who teaches us “how better ’tis to *be* the poem than write it down.” I don’t know anything of a hereafter, but when I die I want to go to— John, if he goes first, and I pray he may not.

I was glad to hear you say, “you didn’t want to be let alone.” I think *I heard your voice* in that sentence. You like me, don’t you? It makes me very happy thinking so anyhow, and I *do* think so, and even if you’d say you didn’t, I doubt if I’d believe you, so there, now — here’s a quandary of some kind! What’s to be done? Tell you what: I’ll steal in upon you as in fancy I see you reading this, and even as you said, “lay a gentle hand upon your shoulder,” saying —

“forgive me!” Do you hear? and do you lift your eyes up to my own? and do you smile? — Then I *am* forgiven — and so I stand here by your side, tranced in some strange silence that lays a viewless finger* on my pencil now, and talks on in my stead.

I do wonder if you would like me if you could know and see me as I am. I’d like you to, of course, but would be almost fearful of the test. But I’ll tell you frankly what I will do, if you’ll take an equal risk; I’ll send you my— (I won’t say “photo,” as the “Wills” and “Harries” do, please mark) *picture* — if — you’ll — let me. (I try to say this very humbly, very bad-boy-ishly, yet after all I want you to know that I say it far more *earnestly* than any other way, and you will understand me rightly I am sure and answer in your next.)

And how do you progress with your work? I can’t say I am waiting *patiently* for that landscape you promised me so long ago; but I am waiting — waiting. Will it *ever* come, and *when*?

*Riley afterwards incorporated this same thought in the fifth stanza of the New Year’s Greeting poem, facsimile of which appears in the front of this volume. — ED.

O yes! — I am quite well acquainted with the author of the little poem “Unwritten” which you sent me in your last. It is Mrs. D. M. Jordan, of Richmond, Ind. I have visited at her home two or three times. I see her quite often. She is an editor as well as a poet, and a most lovable woman. She is a woman of wonderful magnetism, and it is music to hear her talk. Is married, and has two grown children; one, a daughter, quite recently wedded to some lucky dog whose happiness I trust will follow him forever and forever! I want to tell you all about Mrs. Jordan, for she is my very best friend — but I haven’t time, and perhaps you wouldn’t care to listen anyhow, but I will quote something from a newspaper letter written years ago, when I first met her. It is here in my scrap book: —

“And now let me leave a good taste in your mouth by telling you of my visit to Mrs. Jordan, that charming child of Song whose melody ripples around the happy world. There’s a woman everybody likes at first sight. She meets you with a glad face that only blossoms warmer as you know

her better. She takes your hand and *shakes* it — no dainty affectation of cold finger-tips.

“She is what the English would call ‘a trifle stout’ in stature; but her bearing is both graceful and majestic. She has a way of *growing* in height at certain utterances that makes her manner extremely fascinating. Her eyes are capable of great expression — particularly of the tenderer emotions. So marked is this, in fact, that at the reading of any tender verse her eyes will moisten, and her rich voice fail and falter. I had the rare good fortune to listen to her latest poem, which she laughingly called ‘a bit of jingle,’ but if I might venture an opinion, I would call it a grand poem.

“I met her daughter also—a bright little woman of eighteen, with all the mother’s qualities but the poetry. She is quite handsome, with bright eyes that flash an extra brilliance through a pair of funny ‘specs,’ surmounting a nose ‘Tip-tilted like the petal of a flower.’ ”

So much for my dear friend Mrs. J. That *last* clause was inserted for a purpose, which

of course failed — for have I not told you that she's went and gone and got married to another fellow? and the sigh I breathe here would inflate a hot-air balloon. But there! forgive me again.

When you write, tell me more about yourself. Do as I do, — talk of nothing but yourself. I seem to know you better from your last letter, but you're always saying or intimating that *your ways* and your capabilities and your efforts and all are sort of secondary; and always putting yourself in the background, — and I'm going to take your part, and tell you that you shant talk that way any more, for I know you are better than you try to have me think, and am too true a friend to submit to such innuendoes without coming to your assistance as I now do in this way.

When will you write? Write just as soon as you can, and next time I'll answer with more promptness — nothing shall prevent me.

Yours very truly,

J. W. RILEY

Greenfield, Ind.,
May 16, 1879.

Miss Lizzie Kahle—

Dear friend:—

Some days ago I said I would send you my latest sketch.* I enclose it to you now; also — if you will pardon the vanity — notices of my recent *début* as a reader in our capitol city, Indianapolis. The latter I ask you to kindly return — the former I trust you will like so well you will embalm it in your scrap book for the sake of

Your true friend,

J. W. RILEY

In the meantime, if your letter doesn't shortly arrive I'll be crazier than the sketch I send you indicates.

*"The 'sketch' referred to in letter of May 16th, as being enclosed, was a prose sketch entitled The Tale of a Spider. It was not interesting and I considered it of no literary worth, so did not preserve it." — Signed statement by Elizabeth Brunn, *nee* Kahle.

Greenfield, Ind.,
June 10, 1879.

Miss Lizzie Kahle—

Dear friend: —

I am not so prompt in my reply to your last good letter as I could have been, and wanted to be; but you will pardon the delay when I tell you the anxiety occasioned by my brother's long and still dangerous illness, together with a complication of other trials, has kept me silent with an aching hope that some brighter time than this would dawn upon my needs and my desires.

I think I must be a very disagreeable sort o' wretch about now. There is a lull about the house when I go home, and the old dog lying on the doorstep, with his nose leveled townward over his two paws, always leaps up when I reach the gate, and vanishes around the corner. He knows who's coming. — He's heard some one reading in the papers about *something* having "cast a gloom over the entire community," and he thinks it's me, I've no doubt.

I wonder if you are quite as lonesome as I am. I think not — I hope not — I *pray*

that you are not. I half wish that I were a dog that I might crawl away under the sleepers of some old deserted house, and howl — and howl. I can't express my feelings with any degree of elegance — fine figure wouldn't fit 'em, and it's the veriest selfishness in me to prance 'em out in public anyhow. Guess I'll drive 'em back, and fling old Fate smile for smile.

I was down to the city last week and went skippety-hop to the picture shop to get my picture taken, and when I got there I sat down in a chair, and looked sad and forsaken. There! that fact's embalmed for immortality — for it is a fact that in sitting for a picture the human face assumes its saddest and most hopeless expression. As yet I haven't the result of my last venture, but you may prepare for the worst, for I know the smile I tried to wear will look positively *bleak* — and I'm not what the world would call handsome even at my best; and there never was but one girl ever told me so, and her face was a perfect constellation of freckles, to say nothing of the mastadonian proportions of her hands and feet.

You see I *can't* write pleasantly — there is nothing healthful in my mental composition and I am powerless to affect a lightness and gaiety which I do not feel. You will forgive me. You are good, and you will understand. I want you to write me a better letter than I deserve for this nothingness.

Sometimes I write dialectic poems and publish them anonymously or under *noms de plume*. I will send you two or three,* but will have to copy some. They at least will be more pleasure to you than the poor juiceless lines I have written here.

Truly your friend,

J. W. RILEY

OLD-FASHIONED ROSES

They aint no style about 'em,
And they're sorto pale and faded,
Yit the doorway here without 'em

*Only one of these copies of his "dialectic poems" seems to have survived in the correspondence, — the one entitled "Old Fashioned Roses." It is printed herein, followed by the author's *Note*, written on the back of the sheet on which he copied it in his own handwriting. The text differs slightly from the printed versions.

Would be lonesomer and shaded
With a good-'eal blacker shadder
Than the mornin'-glories makes,
And the sunshine would look sadder
For their good old-fashion' sakes.

I like 'em 'cause they kindo
Sorto make a feller like 'em,—
And I'll tell you, when I find a
Bunch out whur the sun can strike 'em,
It allus sets me thinkin'
O' the ones that used to grow
And peek in thru the chinkin'
O' the cabin, don't you know.

And then I think o' Mother,
And how she used to love 'em
When they wasn't any other,
'Less she found 'em up above 'em,—
And her eyes, afore she shut 'em,
Whispered with a smile and said
We must pick a bunch and put 'em
In her hands when she was dead.

But as I was a-sayin',—
They aint no style about 'em—
Very gaudy or displayin'—
Yit I wouldn't be without 'em,
'Cause I'm happier in these posies
And the hollyhawks and sich,
Than the humin'-bird that noses
In the roses o' the rich.

J. W. RILEY

Note. — Not knowing, of course, that you are familiar with, or will appreciate, the Hoosier dialect, I would say, both in justice to my fellow-Hoosiers and myself, that the two poems within are very careful, and I think, accurate studies, not only of *dialect* but *character* as well, — for, to aptly and truthfully apply the idiom, — “We’re as meller a hearted set o’ folks as you ever laid eyes on!”

J. W. R.

Greenfield, Ind.,
July 13, 1879.

My dear friend: —

I suspect that by this time both your confidence in me, and your patience are almost exhausted. I will not worry you with long excuses for my long silence, but say simply I have been disappointed many ways, and so kept from many things I desired to do — foremost of which a letter to your own good self. I merely scrawl this page now — not as a letter, but as an assurance of my warm

remembrance of you. There's an old love-song from the Japanese, the quaint burthen of which is —

"I have forgotten to forget —"

Well that is my sentiment, believe me.

The main reason of my silence, however, has been that I couldn't enclose the picture when I *did* write — for it was simply horrible!! — and I'm going into the city tomorrow to "try, try again." So I write this merely to assure you that I intend writing you in a week at farthest, and to ask you to forgive me for my apparent neglect of your last best of all letters.

And O yes! — I mustn't forget to tell you that my dialectic poems, under the name of "Walker" are creating some comment through the press both East and West and I enclose a clipping, hoping for a congratulatory smile from you; also a poetical corner — a recent feature of the *Indianapolis Herald* — which I am glad to say is proving most successful. They are odd jingles mainly, though occasionally I think a more than average stanza escapes my

careless pen. I am almost sure you will like "Mirage," for I thought of you every line as I wrote.

And now God bless you, and forgive me, and I will soon send you the letter you deserve.

Ever your true friend,

J. W. RILEY

MIRAGE

I

An alien wind that blew and blew
Over the fields where the ripe grain grew,
Sending ripples of shine and shade
That crept and crouched at her feet and played.

The sea-like summer washed the moss
Till the sun-drenched lilies hung like floss,

Draping the throne of green and gold
That lulled her there like a queen of old.

II

Was it the hum of a bumble bee,
Or the long-hushed bugle eerily

Winding a call to the daring Prince
Lost in the wood long ages since?—

A dim old wood, with palace rare
Hidden away in its depths somewhere!

Was it the Princess, tranced in sleep,
Awaiting her lover's touch to leap

Into the arms that bent above?—
To thaw his heart with a breath of love—

And cloy his lips, through her waking tears,
With the dead-ripe kiss of a hundred years!

III

An alien wind that blew and blew,—
I had blurred my eyes as the artists do,

Coaxing life to a half-sketched face,
Or dreaming bloom for a grassy place.

The bee droned on in an undertone,
And a shadow-bird trailed all alone

Across the wheat, while a liquid cry
Dripped from above, as it went by.

What to her was the far-off whirr
Of the quail's quick wing or the chipmunk's
chirr?—

What to her was the shade that slid
Over the hill where the reapers hid?—

Or what the hunter, with one foot raised,
As he turned to go— yet, pausing, gazed?

— And here's a caddie from the Highlands—
if you like Scotch— better Scotch—

THE LITTLE TINY KICKSHAW.

"— And any pretty little tiny Kickshaw"

— J. H. K. S. P. S.

O the little tiny Kickshaw that Mither sent to me!
'Tis sweeter than the sugar-plum that roars on the tree,
Wi' dainty flavours o' spice, and musky macassar,
The little tiny Kickshaw that Mither sent to me.

'Tis lucious wi' the stane tang o' fruits frae air the sea
And e'en its fragrance gars us laugh wi' langin' lip and ee
Till a' the fragen shew o' white man's mellow honey bee,
Sae veel I lo'e the Kickshaw that Mither sent to me.

O I lo'e the tiny Kickshaw, and I smack my lips wi' glee,
And nicker do I lo'e the taste o' sic a lusciousie,
But maist I lo'e the bonnie hame that could the gift gie
O the little tiny Kickshaw that Mither sent to me.

— M. S. P. S.

— M. S. P. S.

—And here's a *laddie* from the Highlands
— if you *like* Scotch — butterscotch. —

THE LITTLE TINY KICKSHAW*

“— And any pretty little tiny kickshaws.”

— SHAKESPEARE

O the little tiny kickshaw that Mither sent to me!
'Tis sweeter than the sugar-plum that reopens
on the tree,
Wi' dainty flaverin's o' spice, and musky rose-
marie,
The little tiny kickshaw that Mither sent to me.
'Tis lu[s]cious wi' the stalen tang o' fruits frae
o'er the sea,
And e'en its fragrance gars me laugh wi'
langin' lip and ee
Till a' its frazen sheen o' white maun melt
honey be,
Sae weel I lo'e the kickshaw that Mither sent
to me.

O I lo'e the tiny kickshaw, and I smack my lips
wi' glee,
And mickle do I lo'e the taste o' sic a luxourie,
But maist I lo'e the bonnie hans that could the
giftie gie
O' the little tiny kickshaw that Mither sent to me.

J. W. RILEY

*This poem, which is printed exactly as the Poet wrote it to Miss Kahle, differs slightly, both in text and punctuation, from the printed versions.

And O yes! — when I go in with a Lecture Bureau next season — which I will — I'm going to struggle to get down your way. I shall never be content till you see me on "my throne — the rostrum," — that's the way the big bill reads. I fill this blank up with a *real* laugh.

Yours,

J. W. R.

Of course you'll forgive all this display of vanity — no, it isn't vanity — it's just 'cause I'm glad, and want you to know it. But it is such fun to bewilder folks. My best friends don't know I am Walker, and you will notice comment from Mr. B. S. Parker — a leading poet of our State, and one of my closest friends — and only just see what *he* has written to the editor regarding "Walker," and observe, too, the cleverness of the comment following. O, I just clap my hands!

Don't bother about returning the scraps. I have bushels of 'em. You remember the little old myth of "Beauty and the Beast."

I came across a reminder of it yesterday, which I embellish and enclose. I want you to smile upon it.

Kokomo, Ind.,
July 15, 1879.

Once more dear friend: —

My scrawl of yesterday I have carried till today, being so busied with a thousand things. I'm unexpectedly visiting my good friend here, the editor of the *Tribune*. He's going to put me at work, too; so you see, like good Chispa, — "in running away from the thunder I have run into the lightning;" but after all, the world is very good.

You will pardon the apparent haste and untidiness of my last communication, I am sure, and believe me,

As ever your friend,

J. W. RILEY

Later. — I want to tell you all about that cunning little sketch you sent me. When I write I will, and I intend to write soon.

J. W. R.

Maybe I'll send *you* a sketch. *Used* to sketch a little.

Greenfield, Ind.,
August 14, 1879.

Miss Kahle—

Dear friend: —

I cannot blame you if you think me neglectful. It will appear so, though again and again must assure you that I am not. When I wrote you last I was anticipating a brief rest from my labors, but was driven back to work again with scarcely the interval of a good long breath.

I am now regularly furnishing four papers with contributions, besides writing a partnership book, and perfecting an original programme for readings the coming season. So you will see I am indeed overwhelmed, and I must throw in, too, by way of good measure, the fact that I'm in rather ill health. I don't like to acknowledge this, but I feel that I will be better for the confession. I am very nervous, and worry a great deal more than is good for me, and the doctor says if I don't give up night-work (my time of all times for work) I'll just naturally "go out" like a candle. Pleasant contemplation! — isn't it? But this winter will bring

me round all right again, I'm sure — when I get on the road, you know, entrancing the world at large with my rhythmic eloquence, and leaving delighted thousands bathed in tears—Ah, ha! what a picture for the sallow little giant as his pencil trips along the words.

You'll think I have forgotten the picture, too, but I haven't. O but this blotchy old face of mine takes awful! It *aint* blotchy either, but it always takes that way — so you'd think I was uglier than I really am — and that's bad enough. But *will* you wait just a little longer? *Please* see how I *want* you to have my picture, and how more I want yours, and if I don't very soon get a better one than this, why I'll send it along with directions how to look at the paradox — for my mustache is *not* black (as the picture makes it) — my head bald; my eyes brown, or my face solemn, haggard and long as an undertaker's. All this the picture makes me, and I won't submit to it. My hair is rather light in color, and I have a way of brushing it closely down and sleeking it so the camera of the artist just glances off, I guess. Then my mustache is— well what

I have always persisted in calling “amber-colored” — “hardly golden” — a trifle deep even for pinchbeck — but it *aint* red — nor it *aint* black, and you’ll say so when you see me, and like me all the better for not being prejudiced with this paraphrase on my real appearance.

In the meantime, I find that I am sadly missing your good letters, and I *need* them. They are more to me than I can tell you, and you must write to me now, now, *now*.

Soon I will have more leisure to respond than now, but by the time another reaches me, I will take the time whether I have it or not, and I will write to you as I want to.

I have got the little sketch you sent, pinned here above my desk, with a terra cotta Venus on either side, and stacks and stacks of poetry heaped high up to her baby feet.

Please write to me *at once*. Tell me you forgive me for everything, ’cause I *can’t* help it all and you *must* forgive me.

I again afflict you with scraps — scraps, — scraps. As ever

Your friend,

J. W. RILEY

Greenfield, August 23, 1879.

My dear friend: —

Your letter is so kind — so very kind and good, that I must write at once to thank you for it and *grab* your two warm hands close in my own and wring them fervently. Only you mustn't be concerned about my health or welfare — anything — 'cause I don't deserve such interest from anyone so good as you. I *do* smile, though, when you say, "I want to ask, like I do of *children* when they cry, what is the matter? Tell me."

Surely if you feel like that, then indeed you comprehend me *just as I am*, — a little helpless child — who would thank God with all his boyish heart if you just could — now this minute — put your hands over my eyes and say, "Now you must sleep;" only — only — I want to be strong enough to bear my burden, and your dear words make me weak. You don't know — you *can't* know — what a weight it is, and how heavier it grows each weary step I take.

Forgive me, but you *mustn't* be so good to me, because *I want you to be happy* —

not like me, who cannot even lift my empty hands at times, and ask God's help. You make me want to call you "little girl." You make me want to come to you creeping on my face and hands, to hide away from all the world and rest — rest! But this is Fate's hand clutching mine, and dragging me from pleasant ways through tangled labyrinths and steep defiles, and over stony paths where no flowers bloom, and no bird ever sings, and *no one* (should I not thank God for that?) to — "*Sit down in the darkness and weep with me on the edge of the world — so love lies dead.*" Yet, I wish that I might *talk* with you a little for *I am good* and you must *know that always*. You are like me in many things, and in one thing in particular, you are inclined to *tire* of it all (I mean this thing of *living on and on* — for — what?) — and ever yearning for some indefinable good that is ever kept from you. Am I not right? Well, I do not know *your* strength, but I will pray that it, too, is like my own; that you can say with me, — "*It all means something*, since God wills it, and may He give me strength and patience to

Greenfield, Aug. 28, '79.

My dear friend:

Your letter is so kind - so
very kind and good, that I must
write at once, to thank you for it
and grab your two warm hands
close in my own and moving them
fervently. - Only you mustn't be con-
cerned about my health or well-
fare - anything. - 'Cause, I don't
deserve such interest from any-
one, so good as you. I don't
smile, though, when you say: "I want
to ask, like I do of children when
they cry - what is the matter? Tell me!"
Surely if you feel like that, then
indeed you comprehend me just as I
am - a little, helpless child - who would
thank God with all this boyish heart,
if you just could - now - this min-
ute - "put your hands over my
eyes and say: 'Now you must sleep!'
- Only - only - I want to be strong
enough to bear my burden, and your
dear words make me weak. You
don't know - you can't know what
a weight it is, and how heavier

"I'll grant each weary step & take
forgive me, but you must be so
good to me, & become. I want you
to be happy - not like me, who
cannot even lift my weary hands
at times, and ask God's help. You
make me want to call you "little
girl"; you make me want to
come to you creeping in my face
and hands, to hide away from all
the world and rest - rest! but
this is Fate's hand clutching mine,
and dragging me from pleasant ways
- through tangled labyrinths and steep
defiles, and over stony paths where
no flowers bloom, and no bird ever
sings; and no one (should I not thank
God for that?) to - "Sit down in the dark-
ness and weep with me on the edge of
the world - so poor lies dead." - -
Yet I wish that I might talk
with you a little - for I am good
and you must know that always.
You are like me in many things, and
in one thing in particular: you are
inclined to tire of it all - (I mean
this thing of living on and on - for what?)
and even yearning for some undefinable
good that is ever kept from you. Am

I not right? Well! I do not know
your strength, but I will pray that
it, too, is like my own, that you can
say with me— "It all means something
since God wills it, and may He give
me strength and patience to abide!"
— And it does mean something since
God wills it, and He will give us
strength and patience to abide!
And I smile now as I fancy
our two souls are kneeling here to-
gether side by side, and praying
in one voice, and God will hear it.

"Your another new moon is here!"

The poems you send are both good.
The Moon-poem especially — only it
is so passionately hopeless! It is
like the sound of my own voice — or
yours — Ours! God bless us yet
a little more than this!

And you are not to cry now, cause
I'm almost well, and will be quite when
your next letter comes, that will cheer
me. And I do promise you not to work
quite so hard as I have been doing, and
I have heard you call to me, and I have
answered, saying — "God bless you, little girl,
you need me so!"
— Mary.

CM

L A T E R.

Will you understand it all?

Will you understand, I wonder, if I tell you that I fear that I am going to make you unhappy? Will you understand me when I tell you that should this prediction prove true that your unhappiness would be my own? I fear you never will quite understand the strange, strange pain ~~now~~ I am, I hardly understand it all myself. At times it is all black-black - before must not think too kindly of me. Not that I don't deserve it, perhaps, - but, rather all the affection I can offer in return is as vain as it is wild and feverish. If I could take your hand and hold it as I say these words you would know how deeply truthful, sad and earnest I am in this belief. My life has been made up of disappointments and despair. This is no morbid fancy, it is fact.

(over)

I have learned to bear it well,
as I have learned to expect
but little else. I ache, but I
grasp on - smiling in the dark.
You are not strong as I am strong.
Your tears must overflow the path
and sweep you back. You must
not know what I understand. God wants
you to be glad, so you must
not lean too far out of the sun-
shine to help me. I am not alone
suffice struggling down here in the
gloom, but I am alone. I am
tired - tired - tired that I cannot
grasp your hand if proffered -
only doubt - doubt. Just hail me
from the brink with cheery words
that will be true for you - and true
for me. who will be stronger
surely, knowing I have dragged my
bright hopes down with my poor
browning ones.

My whole being goes out from
me, and I am willing to burn through

The great distance that divides us
do you hear? - "God bless you,
little girl, and keep you always
glad as you are now."

Your "smile" writes to me at
once, and now that your
face is somewhat a little, but
I hold it in my hand, and
it is bright and beautiful to
me. So, just as I have heard in
where the sunlight falls from
- it is as if you move and it
will see its radiance flow
back, and that will help me.
- Just so God bless us both.

Tell me, when you write, to tell me
all about yourself. And do you have a
hard time, and no rest, and no promise
of it. And are you poor like me - and
ground, though! Ah! so I thought, Well, it
brave. That's all. You are not poor like the world.
Thank God for that. I am so poor I cannot even
keep the sister I love from work. Sometimes I wish
though mine she makes more money than I do with
all my superfluities of Guinea (allegory) / pleasure.

abide." And it *does* mean something since God wills it, and He *will* give us strength and patience to abide. And I smile now as I fancy our two souls are kneeling here together side by side, praying in one voice, and God will hear it.

"*Now another new moon is here.*"

The poems you send are both good. The Moon-poem especially — only it is so passionately hopeless. It is like the sound of my own voice, — or Yours — Ours! God bless us yet a little more than this!

And you are not to *cry* now, 'cause I'm almost well, and will be *quite* when your next letter comes, — that will cure me. And I do promise you not to work quite so hard as I have been doing. *And I have heard you call to me, and I have answered saying — "God bless you, little girl, you rest me so!"*

There, —

J. W. R.

Later. — Will you understand it all? Will you understand, I wonder, if I tell you that I fear that I am going to make you unhappy?

Will you understand me when I tell you that should this premonition prove true, that your unhappiness would be my own? I fear you never will quite understand the strange, strange paradox I am. I hardly understand it all myself. At times, it is all black — black. You must not think too kindly of me. Not that I don't *deserve* esteem, perhaps, — but, rather, all the affection I can offer in return is as vain as it is wild and fervid. If I could take your hand and hold it as I say these words you would know how deeply truthful, sad and earnest I am in this belief. My life has been made up of disappointments and despairs. This is no morbid fancy, — it is fact. I have learned to bear it well, as I have learned to expect but little else. I ache, but I grope on — smiling in the dark. You are not strong as I am strong. Your tears would overflow the path and sweep you back. *You must not know what I endure.* God made you to be glad, so you must not lean too far out of the sunshine to help me. I am not wholly selfish, struggling down here in the gloom, but I am worn

and O so tired — tired — tired, that I can but grasp your hand if proffered — only don't — don't! Just hail me from the brink with cheery words. That will be best for you — and as for me — why, I will be stronger surely, knowing I have dragged no bright hopes down with my poor drowning ones.

My whole being goes out from me, and I am calling to you through the great distance that divides us. Do you hear? — God bless you, little girl, and keep you always glad as you are good.

You must write to me at once. I dream now that your face is drooped a little, but I lift it with my hand, and it is bright and beautiful to me. So, set it heavenward and where the sunlight falls full on it as you move, and I will see its radiance flash back, and that will help me. And so *God bless us both*.

Want you, when you write, to tell me all about yourself — And *do* you have a hard time, and no rest, and no *promise* of it? And are you poor like me — and proud, though? Ah, so I thought. Well, be *brave*. That's all. *You* are not poor like the *world*;

thank God for that. I am so poor I cannot even keep the sister I love from work. Some times I smile though when she makes more money than I do, with all my preponderance of Genius — (ahem! !) — *please* laugh!

Greenfield, Ind.,
September 1, 1879.

My dear friend: —

You will never know how bewilderingly glad and proud your gift has made me. You mentioned in your letter that you would send me “Two little pictures,” though they did not get here till three days after — Saturday — and this is Monday. Positively I don’t know what to do or say. The surprise is so great — their worth is so much above even what I had fancied — and they are so *everything* to me that I am powerless to do anything but stretch my empty hands out toward you as I sometimes do toward Heaven when it is good to me.

I fancy that this face of Beatrice is like your own, and so I smile and smile upon it, wishing it could speak and tell me just how tired it has grown of everything, that I might

bend and touch it with my own, and say "Dear child, be rested for my sake." You must wait a long time patiently till I can think of something that will please you in return. I can't imagine now what it will be, but it must be something very rare and rich and curious and beautiful and dear in your eyes. So I must think and ponder studiously for ages yet.

And how I like this little piece of character — Genre, do you call it? — something like that, I suspect — but *I* will call it *homey*, and *heartsome*, and most lovable, in its dim, *earthy* beauty, and matter-of-fact individuality. I am not critic enough to tell *why* the work is good, but I feel intuitively that as a real artistic performance it *does* possess the highest merit. I have many artist-friends at Indianapolis, and am with them quite often, and I think I absorb in some degree something of their knowledge and insight regarding such things. Anyway, I shall hold that this little work is not only a very truthful life-study, but in color, tone, and conscientious treatment in all technical details, it is masterly.

I haven't swung them up yet. My little room here is so dismal now that I will be forced to remodel it throughout, and I'm too poor to paper the walls as I would like, or do anything but turn the carpet, wash the windows, and move my desk to some other corner. But I can *smile* yet. Don't forget that, and have *waited* so long already that the "good time coming" *can't* be so *very* far away.

I was expecting to go into the city today with my brother, who is still an invalid, but he feared the rain, and so will not go until tomorrow. Then I'm going to get you a *tin-type* of this face of mine anyhow. I'm growing very anxious for you to see just how I look now, 'cause I've concluded to sacrifice the mustache in the interest of my character readings, and once off it must remain so, 'cause it would argue to the dear public, — seeing me first with and then without beard, — that I had no stability of character and all that. So really it is a very serious change to contemplate. Besides, I've worn a mustache now for years and years; in fact this is my first, as it must be my last.

I must hurry through. I have only time to clip and enclose a recent "interview" with a special correspondent.* I shudder as I fold it up, feeling that in it I send you more of my real self than you have ever gathered through my letters, or perhaps have ever dreamed. I think a thousand things. Maybe you will be shocked — though I don't believe that; maybe you will think "It might have been worse," or maybe, — "He's *better now*" — and that's some comfort. No matter what you think, my dear, dear friend, I will be proud if you will recognize in it honesty above all subterfuge, and [endeavor?] to defy the censure of the *Vere de Vere* element, since after all, —

" 'Tis only noble to be good."

I don't know what your next letter will be. I am restful. I am waiting; I believe in you, and you have made me better. I think you are wholly good, and you have my fullest confidence.

*Mrs. Brunn (*nee* Kahle) says that this "interview" was not preserved, and that she has no recollection of what it was, or what became of it.

God bless you and keep you always glad;
and with all gratitude and warm esteem,
believe me,

Your true friend,

J. W. RILEY

HOPE*

HOPE, bending o'er me one time, snowed the
flakes

Of her white touches on my folded sight,
And whispered, half rebukingly, "What makes
My little girl so sorrowful tonight?"

O scarce did I unclasp my lids, or lift
Their tear-glued fringes, as with blind embrace
I caught within my arms the mother-gift,
And with wild kisses dappled all her face.

That was a baby-dream of long ago.

My fate is fanged with frost, and tongued
with flame:

My woman-soul, chased naked through the
snow,

Stumbles and staggers on without an aim.

And yet, here in my agony, sometimes

A faint voice reaches down from some far
height,

And whispers through a glamoring of rhymes, —
"What makes my little girl so sad to-night?"

J. W. R.

*This poem, in Riley's handwriting, appears on a long
sheet, above the prose note that here follows it.

September 18, 1879.

Here is a little poem that *wrote itself*. I hardly know if I fully comprehend it, but something tells me *you* will like it, for all its strangeness, and I trust you will.

Soon I will answer your last note and gallant letter that made me laugh and cry. You mustn't be so queer! I'm growing envious — or jealous, rather. I've been without a rival in that line for so long I can't be reconciled to any competition. I know the letter like a prayer, and I do breathe it quite as fervently.

Don't think that I suspect you of duplicity in any way. I only thought the *Elde Kael* poem *might* be yours, sent to the *Herald* through a friend, perhaps. Am truly sorry, though, you don't live nearer. But never mind! — for I *will* find you *some day*. Then I will tell you just how good you have been to me (for *you don't know*), and just how I appreciate your every kindly word and wish. Only you mustn't go on thinking I am not strong and well, or ever likely to be

otherwise — 'cause I'm a *positive athlete*, though I don't *look* so.

Just completing the lecture. You should hear it. *Good*, if it is mine! 'Spect there's not a line of it but was untangled from thoughts of you — (slap him! slap him!). Anyway, I'm thinking of you *now*, and shall work no more tonight. "God bless us every one!" The Cenci smiles and smiles. How strange is everything! Good night.

Greenfield, Ind.,
October 10, 1879.

Dear friend: —

It has been ages since I last wrote you, but you will forgive me when I tell you that I've been preparing a special programme for a Benefit tendered me by the people of Indianapolis. It is such an undertaking for me — and I *must* succeed there, of all places in the world — that for weeks I have forced myself to neglect everything else. And I write now simply to enclose a long-promised *tin-type*,* for it is not a *likeness*, as in spite

*See left-hand picture on frontispiece in this volume; also explanation at page 69 *ante*.

of all attempts my face refuses to be reproduced in even "shadowy similitude." The general contour of head and feature, however, is exact, and the eyes are positively the best I have ever succeeded in getting. But this picture I intend to *suppress* as soon as I succeed in getting a successful photograph of the *present Riley*, — for now, as I told you, my face is a barren desert, with no oasis in the shape of a mustache to break its broad monotony of desolation, and I only send you this that you may hold it as a sort of hostage until my present and future self arrives; then you must return it. The other I will send in a few weeks at farthest.

And now in the meantime, enclose me your own, for I can never tell you just how eager I am to look upon your kindly face. You say you are anything but handsome, but I know you will be beautiful to me. God bless you always, and keep you forever just the good little girl that rests me so!

Please write me soon. Your letter will please me even beyond the most flattering ovation that could be given at my approaching appearance at the shrine of Public Favor.

I enclose also announcements of the coming Trial* — which please return, as I file away every scrap of good and bad that anybody ever says about

Your True Friend, "Till death us do part."

J. W. RILEY

Greenfield, Ind.,

October 18, 1879.

Goin' to call you *My dear, dear friend*, today, — 'cause your picture's come at last, and I do love it so! I've been talkin' to it, and smiling over it and wondering at it, but you just stand there dead still, and will not even whisper to me in return — and so, like the grim old lover of "Beautiful Evelyn Hope," I press one blossom in your folded hand saying, —

"There! that is our secret. Go to sleep, —
You will wake and remember and understand."

You are not exactly like the picture I have

*Doubtless referring to the coming Benefit to be tendered him in Indianapolis.



been holding up before my fancy's eye — you are even more *womanly* than my ideal — and O so womanly was she! — That is my one best word of all — WOMAN. It is so regal, high and pure and white! God bless you, WOMAN !!

Have been too confused and *tangled* up to sit for the *present* Riley, but you may look for that now very soon, as I begin to breathe once more. The prolonged agony attending *The Benefit* is over now, and I am very, very — (I was going to say “happy,” but it aint quite that, — for the old ache in my throat is not quite gone and it will never go, I guess. But I am GLAD, and very, very thankful — to God first, then my little girl — then all the world.

Such a brave poem was that you sent me!* I do hug it in my arms. God bless you, — bless you — bless you — just 'cause I can't help thinking that your own heart hurts like mine. — Only I'm too selfish to think it could hurt worse. I wouldn't allow that, though the white lips of your soul moaned “I am tired!” — O *are* you “tired?” Once

*See poem in full, next following this letter.

I wrote a poem called "Tired."* That was the burthen of it, — Tired! Tired! And I must rest. The last verses read: —

And I must rest! — But do not say "he died,"
In speaking of me, sleeping here alone.
I kiss my fate as one might kiss a bride,
And close my eyes in slumber all my own.
Hereafter I shall neither sob nor moan,
Nor murmur one complaint: All I desired,
And failed in life to find, will now be known. —
So let me dream — Good night! — And on
the stone
Say simply, "He was Tired."

The Benefit has been *such* a success, in every way! You can but be glad with me,

*The last stanza of this poem which appears in the printed editions under the title, "An Outworn Sappho," reads as follows:—

And I must rest.— Yet do not say she died,
In speaking of me sleeping here alone.
I kiss the grassy grave I sink beside,
And close mine eyes in slumber all mine own:
Hereafter I shall neither sob nor moan
Nor murmur one complaint; — all I desired
And failed in life to find, will now be known —
So let me dream. Good night! And on the stone
Say simply: She was tired.

In copying it for Miss Kahle the Poet changed the gender from feminine to masculine, thus making it a sort of personal requiem, somewhat after the order of Stevenson's famous requiem poem. He also improved the third line by substituting —

I kiss my fate as one might kiss a bride
for
I kiss the grassy grave I sink beside.

so I send press notices without comment of my own. You will return the scraps as before, as I will need them as references, you know; such is *business* (how I hate the very word!).

Now I hold your hand, and say God bless you, and Good by. You will write soon and I'll hope that when I write again I can say more than this.

Yours as ever,

J. W. R.

A WOMAN'S CONCLUSION

I said, if I might go back again
To the very hour and place of my birth,
Might have my life whatever I chose,
And live it in any part of the earth,

Put perfect sunshine into my sky,
Banish the shadow of sorrow and doubt,
Have all my happiness multiplied,
And all my suffering stricken out;

If I could have known in the years now gone
The best that a woman comes to know,
Could have whatever will make her blest,
Or whatever she thinks will make her so;

Have found the highest and purest bliss
That the bridal-wreath and ring inclose,
And gained the one out of all the world
That my heart as well as my reason chose,

And if this had been, and I stood tonight
By my children, lying asleep in their beds,
And could count in my prayers, for a rosary,
The shining row of their golden heads, —

Yea! I said, if a miracle such as this
Could be wrought for me, at my bidding, still
I would choose to have my past as it is,
And to let my future come as it will!

I would not make the path I have trod
More pleasant or even, more straight or wide,
Nor change my course the breadth of a hair,
This way or that way, to either side.

My past is mine, and I take it all,
Its weakness — its folly, if you please —
Nay, even my sins, if you come to that,
May have been my helps, not hindrances!

I have saved my body from the flames,
Because that once I had burned my hand;
Or kept myself from a greater sin
By doing a less — you will understand;

It was better I suffered a little pain,
Better I sinned for a little time,
If the smarting warned me back from death,
And the sting of sin withheld from crime.

Who knows his strength, by trial, will know
What strength must be set against a sin,
And how temptation is overcome;
He has learned, who has felt its power within!

And who knows how a life at the last may show?
Why, look at the moon from where we stand!
Opaque, uneven, you say; yet it shines,
A luminous sphere, complete and grand!

So let my past stand, just as it stands,
And let me now, as I may, grow old;
I am what I am, and my life for me
Is the best — or it had not been, I hold.

ALICE CAREY

Greenfield, Ind.,
November 22, 1879.

Dear friend: —

I'm an awful quiet fellow, ain't I? Sorto' mysterious like, almost — 'spect you're beginning to think. But you'll forgive, I know — 'cause you've never failed me yet, and somehow I feel so sure you understand. "You will wake and remember and understand" — won't you, Evelyn Hope? You know that poem of Browning's, don't you?

Well, I have been very busy; not so busy, though, that I have forgotten you — only I

just couldn't find time to write the kind of letter that I wanted to — and even now you see I'm galloping along like a hook-and-ladder company to a conflagration. Haven't time even to tell you how good your last letter was and how it made me bless you over and over again. You must guess all that — and you can if you will bury your kind face away down deep in your pillow this night, and think of the grim old face that as it bends above this page is molten with a smile, and even half-way handsome, I believe.

God bless you — bless you — bless you. I say it over and over again. You are good, I know — only *you must not have presentiments — or feel blue — or sad — or any-way but happy. Do you hear?*

I'm regularly employed now — what time I'm not before the “clamouring public,” lecturing — on a daily paper, and my home henceforth is *Indianapolis*, and you must direct care *Daily Journal* — don't forget that! Next time I write I'll make a *letter* of it — this is but a note — the only thing I can offer. I enclose a sample of the little

sketches I am forced to dash off now. Haven't time for anything but such bits as this — and odds and ends in verse — and paragraphs — and nothings.

O yes, — I must tell you about a late visit to Mrs. D. M. Jordan, evidently your favorite, since you send me so many clippings from her pen. Mr. Griswold — the Fat Contributor — and myself went in cahoots last week, and lectured jointly for her benefit at Richmond, Ind. O, what a time we had! If you could only see and know her! Why, the very *voice* of her is pure music! And she gave me a little volume of her poems with her own handwriting in the front — and do you know what I'm going to do with it? Going to bundle it up, and send it to you to muse over, and laugh over — and cry over, and thank God and Mrs. Jordan and ME for every line of it — Ho! ho!

And so Good night — Good night!

“What! both your snowy hands? Ah, then I'll have to say good night again!”

Oh, I must hunt that little song and send it

too. It's so like you — or so it seems — only you're more vague and shadowy, and farther away — yes, even farther than my fancy dares to go.

Yours as ever,

J. W. RILEY

Indianapolis, Ind.,
December 12, 1879.

O, my dear girl, how long you have kept me waiting! But you're here again, and just how glad your letter makes me you will never know. I've fancied a thousand awful reasons why you haven't written, and a thousand corresponding fears have been worrying me till — but no matter! — you are here at last, and I *grab* you up and hug and hold you till the breath o' me goes crumbling into little broken bits of sighs like baby-breezes 'fore they've learnt to walk without wabblin' — bless 'em!

I'm mighty glad to think that *you* think I think I'm happy — (I steal this dubious

phraseology from Coventry Patmore, I believe: —

“I saw him Kiss your Cheek!” “ ’Tis true.”
“O, modesty!” “Twas strictly kept —
He thought me asleep — at least I knew
He thought I thought he thought I slept.”)

But I *am* about *half* happy, — I won’t acknowledge more, — though just why I should be I can’t see for the life o’ me! I’m working hard enough to scare *you* to death, though I hasten to lull your fears by the admission that I’m weighing heavier than ever before in my life. Just guess how *big* I am! Hundred an’ twenty-six pounds! O aint it awful! Now let me guess how much you weigh — and you must acknowledge if I guess it right. — Just about one hundred and eight pounds. There! aint that a good guess? — just from ’way off here?

The “Tired” poem you send me is so full of *strength* — the very bone and thew of passionate yearning for that great vast unknown good that is always *coming* to us — though it never gets *quite* here. —

“Ah! would you care? and would you bend
down, Sweet,
And kiss the chill mouth with regretful pain?
And would your tears fall downward on the
hands,
Pallid, and purified of all earth's stain?”

To me the poem is *almost* perfect — though
had I written it, I might have made it less
perfect with a concluding verse like this:—

Christ! you who died ere weariness like this
Had reached you, for a moment's rest beside
The one I love, that I might taste one kiss,
O willingly would I be crucified.

Such a galloping letter is this, and so
untidy withal, I'm more than half ashamed
to offer it. But it's the very best I *can* do,
and you're so good I know you'll pardon it
for all its incompleteness. I want you to
just keep on liking me all you can, and when
I do say, or do, unpleasant things, just tell
me of it, or shut both your fists and pound
me like a drum — anything is good enough
for me if even unwittingly I should wound
your woman's heart in any way.

I'm up very late tonight — you mustn't

blame me this time — I've got company —
you're here, and so I sit here with your two
warm hands in mine. There! there! and
there again!

J. R.

Indianapolis, Ind.,
December 26, 1879.

My dear, dear friend: —

I *can't* thank you — I *can't* write — I
can't say one word! I have been lecturing
'way out west, and am just back to find your
magnificent Christmas present waiting me
— and your letter — God bless you, little
girl, you rest me so! But how bewildered
I am! I want to send you something in
return for the pictures (they are here with
me in more sumptuous quarters than my
dim old room at home — for here is brussels
and French furniture, and all that — with
great molten bulbs of gas to light it up —
Ah! I'm growing proud and cold and austere,
shall I say? No, no! my little girl, I'm only
growing gentler with my growing fortunes,
and I like YOU — O you *can't* guess — you

can never guess how much). I haven't time, nor the taste, I fear, to select some present you would like — leastwise I dread making the attempt — for of course I would never know if I suited you or not — for even though the gift should displease you, I know you would not acknowledge it, and so I'm going to do with you just as I have wished a hundred times others would do with me (though not in your instance — for the presents you have given me were just the very ones of all the world afforded that I want!) — but what I'm going to do — or rather what I'm going to propose to do — is to send you a present in hard money, for you to use just as you like. Will you let me do this? I ask in all seriousness. I could buy you a picture — I could buy you something in statuary — a book — a piece of jewelry — (no, I couldn't — 'cause I'm almost certain your taste is far above that). But no matter — whatever I might buy, I am still in doubt if it would be either pleasing or appropriate, — so I am just going to have you tell me that you won't be offended if I send my present in money — Hard

Cash! Ah! that's a sweet old word if you study it rightly! And in offering this, I must not forget to assure you that whatever amount I shall send, I can freely spare, and without in the least inconveniencing my own selfish self. In fact, if you don't let me do as I want to in this, I'll be *mad at you* — that's all. And you have told me time and again that everything I did was right, so I must have my way — for I do most solemnly assure you that I believe it would be right, and were it otherwise I would not offer it. So you just begin your next letter with "dear friend" as you always do, and don't forbid me — then I will know that you do indeed trust and believe in me, and then my gift, just as munificent (no more) as I can make it, shall reach you.

I hold both hands out to you — I look your two eyes full of all kindly things — I brim them over with pure joy — and sometime soon — I hope — I may lean closer yet and listen to your voice.

You must pardon this hurried scrawl, — I am busier than a hive o' bees — just such

lots and lots of lecture engagements all over the country!

And still, still I am *so hungry!* As ever,

J. W. RILEY

Greenfield, Ind.,

January 2, 1880.

— And A Happy New Year!

Dear, dear friend: —

A week ago I wrote you the enclosed,* but have been too big a coward to send it. And in all the time I have been withholding it I have searched in vain for some appropriate present for you. I *want* to send you something — but *what*, I can't find — so in sheer desperation I enclose this week-old proposition — though in the meantime I have thought of another way of putting it, i.e., I'm going to give you — for my New Year's gift — you never would guess what — *I'm going* to give you a — BENEFIT. Ho! ho! Now ain't that just the jolliest idea in the world? I'm lecturing, on an average,

*Referring to the previous letter, of December 26.

about four times a week, and am succeeding so wonderfully in pleasing people, and myself as well, that you must be pleased too, and utter no protest. The proceeds of my next lecture shall be yours, and you are to invest it in whatever way, or ways, you please. You *can't* object to this, — for *Benefits*, you know, are tendered *artists*, actors, and literary people every day. Even your humble servant, you will remember, was mighty glad and proud of one extended him not long ago. So you must accept the one I tender you, though it be not so announced upon the bills or hallooed from the house-tops.

Now I am glad, — 'cause at last, at last, I have settled within my own bewildered and long-suffering brain the most intricately complex question that ever tangled its relentless talons in the wool of my mentality. Just think how happy I must be — not how *happy*, but how *fortunate* — that's better.

Three days ago I met Burdette, the funny man of the *Hawkeye*. Our hitherto diverse paths across the lecture field came together

at last, and we shook hands and swore to love each other always. He is just as true and pure and good as he is funny, and you'd like him, I know — you *must* like him, that's all! — 'Cause I do, you know. I'm going to enclose to you the card he wrote for me, so be good to it always, and nestle it away among your *sacreddest* of treasures.

I write, as I must, all hurriedly. I am so busy, as you know. God bless you! Write soon — as ever,

Your old friend,

J. W. R.

Indianapolis, Ind.,

January 21, 1880.

My dear friend: —

I have stared through all the shelving of the world, to at last select and send you this.* I don't know whether it will please

*"The phrase 'and send you this' used in the second line of letter of January 21, 1880, refers to Songs from the published writings of Alfred Tennyson, set to music by various persons, — being a folio book, bound in yellow and gold cloth and inscribed in Riley's autograph, 'To Miss Lizzie D. Kahle with the regards of her friend J. W. Riley, Indianapolis, Ind., 1880.'" — Signed statement by Elizabeth Brunn, *nee* Kahle.

you or not. I hope it will — but after all, it is so poor a gift.

It was mighty good of you to say that you were poor — and mighty noble in you to be proud — only— only— I would like to send you something that would be of *real* value to you, being poor. *Now*, you know, I'm going to be rich, and could help you, and would be so glad to — O so glad — and it would make me happier and better and that's why I do want to help you — if you'll ever permit me to. You wanted to help me once, and would again, I know, so whether the time is come, or ever is to come, you must let me help you — and while I can — 'cause maybe, after while, I *can't* help anyone — not even myself — and in that instance, I'll call on you sure!

And so, God bless you always, little girl, and always feel and know that with you I am wholly good.

I write hurriedly, as you see. I am pressed with hundreds of duties, but soon will try to write you at more length.

As ever yours,

J. W. RILEY

Indianapolis, Ind.

Feb. 29, 1880.

My dear friend: —

I wonder if it has seemed *long* to you since my last letter — it has seemed like *ages* to me. I have been so wonderfully busy with my lecture business, and so involved with its thousand of matter-of-fact considerations, that I have delayed writing until my mind might be free to dwell on pleasant themes. But I find the longer I wait the more complicated become contending forces, so half in despair at last, and desperate, I determine to say something to you this emptiest of all days — Sunday.

I have been speaking almost every night for weeks and weeks — am very tired of it all, I assure you. I have not been meeting with the best success either, in a financial point of view, but still I am not falling behind in any way, and therefore have no reason to find fault or be discouraged. One good thing is, I have visited no point yet, in the capacity of reader, without pleasing those who *have* heard me, and being recalled the second time at least. So you see I am at

Indianapolis, Feb. 29, 1880.

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vancing my reputation, and that
of course is "money in my
pocket", as the old phrase

goes.

I cannot tell you how often I
think of you, or with what
kindly feeling. I shall never forget
you, and you must never hurt me.

by thinking me capable of forgetting.
You know in your last letter
you almost question the strength
of my fidelity, as though I could
be won away from your regard by
any force of fate or circumstance.
I want you always to know that
I am your friend; and that, although
I am forever to be united the warm
clasp of your hand, or listen to
the spoken assurance of your
esteem. Still on and on through
time, I yet shall "love you better
than you know" and pray that
God will bless, and make you
happy, whatever bitter destiny remains
for me. I wish that I might
see you face to face, and tell
you just how pitiless and changeless

to my fate, and make, please to
be on the many seeming paradoxes
of my life. But you will understand
at least, if not now, that I am
neither fanciful or misanthropic—
only most seriously, sensible of the
one great fact of my existence—
that I am powerless to stay or
change the force that hurries me
along to some dread dissolution of
nature. I try to believe otherwise,
and laugh lightly at fate, but still
in spite of all I feel no rest and
am so tired!

I think I could do such
unbearable things—but must never
I say so—than this to my ever
best friend in all the world. I hope
you will be kind and good.

to me when I most needed just
 such help; and when, too, not one
 other friend of all that have surrounded
 themselves my friends came to me with
 a word of cheer or heartful sympathy.
 And so it is that over and over
 I pray God to make you happy,
 and myself more grateful every day.
 And if ever He will be so good
 to me, I want to come some
 time and reach this right hand
 out and grasp your own, and ^{you-} say
 in such words and ways that
 you will know are true as heaven—
 that I am indeed your friend as
 you are mine. God keep my little girl
 till that day comes! I will enclose
 with this a photograph—the one long-
 promised. It is like me as I now am,
 though I fear you will not like it even
 half so well as that old tintype with the
 misdoings and the smitten cheeks. Please write

to me all over, and tell me
you forgive my long, long silence.
I don't think anything of me but good -
and though I am not always
happy, I am not always
unhappy. I am happy in the things
I do, and I am happy in the things
I am doing.

Yours truly,
J. H. P.

J. H. P.

least advancing my reputation, and that of course is "money in my pocket," as the old phrase goes.

I cannot tell you how often I think of you, or with what kindly feeling. I shall never forget you, and you must never hurt me by thinking me capable of forgetting. You know in your last letter you almost question the strength of my fidelity — as though I *could* be won away from your regard by any force of fate or circumstance! I want you always to know that I am your friend, and that, although I am forever to be denied the warm clasp of your hand, or listen to the spoken assurance of your esteem, still on and on through Time I yet shall "love you better than you know," and pray that God will bless and make you happy, whatever bitter destiny remains for me.

I wish that I might see you face to face, and tell you just how pitiless and changeless is my fate, and make plain to you the many seeming paradoxes of my life. But you will understand at last, if not now, that I am neither fanciful nor misanthropic — only most seriously sensible of the one great

fact of my existence, i.e., that I am powerless to stay or change the fate that hurries me along to some dread desolation of futurity. I try to believe otherwise, and laugh lightly oftentimes, but still in spite of all I get no rest and am so tired.

I think I oughtn't say such miserable things, but what can I say other than this to my one best friend of all the world? Do you know that you have been kind and good to me when I most needed just such help, and when, too, not one other friend of all that have avowed themselves my friends came to me with a word of cheer or heartfelt sympathy. And so it is that over and over I pray God to make you happy, and myself more grateful every day. And if ever He will be so good to me, I want to come some time and reach this right hand out and grasp your own, and tell you in such words and ways that you will know are true as Heaven — that I am indeed your friend as you are mine. God keep my little girl till that day comes!

I will enclose with this a photograph — the one long-promised. It is like me as I



now am, though I fear you will not like it even half so well as that old tin-type with the mustache and the sunken cheeks.

Please write to me at once, and tell me you forgive my long, long silence. Don't think anything of me but good — and though I am not always happy you must know your letters make me happier than all things else.

As ever and always yours,

J. W. RILEY

Indianapolis, Ind.,

March 20, 1880.

Dear friend: —

You are always so very patient with me that I fear sometimes I almost wait too long before answering your letters. Anyway, I know how lenient you are, and when bothered with much work and cares of other kinds, I just think, "I will put off writing to my good friend L. Kahle till I'm in better humor, and she will understand."

I know of nothing new to tell you of, unless it be to say that my prospects are growing good again, — and for a long time they

have been anything but that. Not that I have ceased in any measure to strive for their advancement — only there come kinks and twists and tangles in the *times*, just as in the smoothest silken skeins; and always at such times I worry, fume and fret in spite of all, and so am never in condition but to vex and still disturb, when I should calmly take things as I find them.

I think the lines you quote from Byron most appropriate, for I am intensely eager to win something of a name, since it would seem that all things else must be denied. But this is not the prelude of another moan, for I shall have no further bitterness to waste on Fate. I'm going to do my best to smile the wrinkles from my life, and drown out all the discords with the best laugh I can raise.

Your own life is, as you have intimated, anything but sunshine and fair weather, and I want you always to know that whatever it has been, is, or may be, you have a true friend in me; and one, too, who can appreciate from every sad experience just what it is to feast on sorrow, and go famishing

Duchanopolis, Ind., March 30, 1880.

Dear Friend:

You are always so very patient with me that I fear sometimes I almost wait too long before answering your letters. Any way, I know how busy you are, and when bothered with much work, and cares of other kinds, I just think, "I will put off writing to my good friend L. Kalle, till I'm in better humor, and she will understand."

I know of nothing new to tell you of — unless it be to say that my prospects are growing good again — and for a long time they have been anything but that. Not that I have ceased in any measure to strive for this advancement — only there come kinks and twists, and tangles in the lines, just as in the smoothest silken skeins; and always at such times I — — — worry; fume and fret in spite — of all, and

so am never in condition but to vex⁽²⁾
and still disturb when I should calmly
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appropriate, - for I am intensely eager
to win something of a name, since
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solutely to know that, whatever it has
been, is, or may be, you have a true
friend in me, and one, too, who can
appreciate, from every sad experience,

just what it is to feast on. (3)
sorrow, and go famishing forever for
~~the~~ taste of peace and utter happiness.
When I die, which bless God I will do
some day - I have no desire at once
to be translated to the Perfect Land -
- because I want a long, long rest
of utter chaos - ages of rest and
blank forgetfulness, wherein I may
catch up, and gratify my present
vast and limitless demands. I say
this with a half smile and whole
earnestness - but still - no matter! x x x

When you write me next I am going to
hope that you will tell me more
about all that I'd ask of you -
so that I may may reach out my
hands to you, and let you feel that
they are warm with every sympathy, and
tender to the touch as are your own -
God bless you always, and God bless ^{you}
us both, and keep us ever strong, with lifted
brows, and faces set forever heavenward. Yours, J. R.

Here is a little poem I wrote last night, and
copy for you this bright afternoon.

SLEEP.

Orphaned, I cry to thee,
Sweet Sleep; O, kneel and be
A mother unto me!
Calm thou my childish fears,
And fold mine eyelids to all tenderly,
And dry my tears.

Come, Sleep, all drowsy-eyed
And faint with languor, slide
Thy dim face down beside
Mine own, that I may rest
And nestle in thine arms and there abide
And be thy guest.

Good night to every care,
And shadow of despair -
Good night to all things where
~~With~~ is no delight! -

Sleep opens her dark arms, and swooning there
I cry, Good night!

W. L.

forever for the taste of peace and utter happiness. When I die — which bless God I will do some day — I have no desire *at once* to be translated to the Perfect Land, because I want a long, long rest of utter chaos — *ages* of rest and blank forgetfulness, wherein I may catch up, and gratify my present vast and limitless demands. I say this with a half smile and whole earnestness — but still— no matter!

When you write me next, I am going to hope that you will tell me more about all that old ache of yours, so that I may reach out my hands to you, and let you feel that they are warm with every sympathy, and tender to the touch as are your own. God bless you always, and God bless us both, and keep us ever strong, with lifted brows, and faces set forever heavenward.

Yours,

J. W. R.

(Over). — Here is a little poem I wrote last night, and copy for you this bright afternoon. —

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A mother unto me!
Calm thou my childish fears,
And fold mine eyelids to all tenderly,
And dry my tears.

Come, Sleep, all drowsy-eyed
And faint with langour, slide
Thy dim face down beside
Mine own, that I may rest
And nestle in thine arms and there abide
And be thy guest.

Good night to every care,
And shadow of despair —
Good night to all things where
Within is no delight! —
Sleep opens her dark arms, and swooning
there
I cry, Good night!

J. W. RILEY

Indianapolis, Ind.,
April 13, 1880.

Dear friend: —

'Spect this'll be an awful *scrimpy* little
letter, 'cause I'm all unsettled, like your-
self, and tangled up so with a thousand

*The text and punctuation in our MS. differs considerably
from the printed version, but we give it here exactly as the
Poet wrote it.

things. I was mighty sorry though to find in your good letter such an undertone of sadness and unrest. Guess we must get braver than we are! I can stand my own sorrows with more patience than the sorrows of my friends. And you are good to me, and have been always, and it would make me very glad indeed if anything that I might say or do could make you happier. I think so much of *self*, and dwell so on my own needs and desires that sometimes I am more than half convinced that I do others wrong who suffer just as much and yet make no complaint. I know you must have much to try your patience, being noble and ambitious, yet compelled so long "to labor and to wait." But I am sure God must mean *something* by it all. And so, dear friend, we'll smile back all the tears and say Amen to all God says. You think that I have more than you to make me glad, and keep me propped securely beneath all the burdens Fate can weigh one with. You only *think* so, — though you may be right, and I myself wrong, — yet I seem to *know* such utter loneliness as I pray God may

never even cast its shadow over you. But I'm not going to cry out against it any more. There! let's be glad, and "Let today pass by flower-crowned and singing."

And so you're stationed now in Pittsburg, and I'm glad. I'm glad of everything you do, because it's always for the best. You are the wisest little woman in the world — at least you seem so — and I like you all the better, knowing how you have to plan to get along and make the most of everything, and yet find so much time for goodly deeds, and kindness to others all about you.

I've been hoping all this busy season through that I might be fortunate enough to "lay up" quite enough money for an idle summer, in which I might "take mine ease," and run about a bit, and visit you, and take you by the hand, and thank you with real living words for all your goodness to me. But I'm really afraid I'll have to work harder than ever — 'cause I've been losing money as well as making it, and am just too poor for any use — though I do make quite an *outward* show, and keep my chin high in

the air. I'm in better health, too, than I ever was before, and have just been fairly *boosting my reputation* along! *Next* season — Ah, the money I will make! Though I *may* make quite enough from this on, for my writings are in growing demand, and at better prices all the time. My newest victory is the New York *Sun*. And such a dear delightful little weenty-teenty hearty letter as I got from Mr. Dana the other day! I'm going to contribute regularly to his old fat paper, and they say, too, that the *Sun* pays higher prices for its contributions than any magazine. I enclose my first poem to them, and must close this letter now to fashion them another rythmic something by next mail.

Write to me, and tell me you are *kindo* happy, anyway! And be happy anyhow, and no matter though neither of us can have the one-tenth part of all our needs, let us thank God heartily that He has made us friends.

As ever yours,

J. W. RILEY

Indianapolis, Ind.,
May 27, 1880.

My dear good friend: —

As usual I have been very busy, and so have neglected your last briefest of all letters a long time. I wanted, and did start to answer it the very day it came — for you will remember what a long, long time you kept me waiting for it. But God bless you! it did [come?]* to me after all, and made me glad, though I think too it made me just a little sort of sorry as well, for it seemed to bear an undertone of sadness along with it, and made me fear that you were having a much harder time than you deserve.

The old problem of this existence is always a worry to me, when I think about it, only I try not to think about it, knowing that the old order of labor for the weak and rest for the strong — riches for the undeserving and poverty for they of generous spirit — cannot be altered, but must abide a fixed law till Heaven bursts in blossom on our

*The original is clearly written, but it seems as if the author inadvertently omitted a word, — perhaps *come*.

eyes, — then we'll *understand*, and not till then.

You have never told me yet what you were doing, though that would matter little after all, for it is *work*, and work of any kind, God knows, is hard enough; though without it we could never be quite so noble as we are, bent with the weight of it. All we can do I guess is just to bear it and smile anyhow — that's what we'll try always to do, "Won't we, Pip?"

Now for months and months, almost, I have been doing but little in the progressive way — financially, I mean, for otherwise I still have God to thank for great success. That's what keeps me alive, I think. I work very hard, but am stronger, and can stand the labor better than I used.

Nearly two months ago I began contributing to the *N. Y. Sun* (Sunday issue) and am growing in favor with my new eastern audience, so indications say. I have many flattering letters from Mr. C. A. Dana, the editor, and will endeavor with all [my] might to be a lasting favorite of his. I am sure he likes my work — though he sometimes

criticizes pretty sharply, as he ought to, of course, for no one knows better than myself that I am anything but perfect in my art.

Here in the city, your pictures still smile down upon me, and over and over I want to send you something in return, but I guess you'll have to wait yet a little longer. *Some-time* you will know that I have not forgotten.

Summer has flung wide her golden gates, and all the land is like a blooming rose. A time for rest and utter laziness, and yet we can't loll back, nor pause a minute's space. But we can be glad for all that, and we will — we will.

Soon I will get together some of my latest poems and send them — not many, for I haven't written much, being so busy with lecturing business. Next season in that field I will reap a great harvest, I am sure. Then with great wads o' money bursting my pockets I will go through at least one summer only working as I care to.

I write you hastily and briefly. I can do no better now. I've a Decoration Day poem to prepare for the 30th, and so you

see *must* leave you. I wring your two warm woman's hands, and so farewell a little. As ever,

J. W. RILEY

Indianapolis, Ind.,
July 6, 1880.

Dear friend: —

Your letter of date June 27th I have been forced to neglect because of my ever-growing engagements in my work.

It's almost wrong, I think with you sometimes, to work with the ambition that I do. But I am so eager to succeed — so feverish in my desire to be something and somebody — that my effort never flags or falters for a minute; but, self-impelled, moves on and on, gathering newer force and power with each succeeding hint of final victory. Hence it is that now I find myself almost hedged in with engagements for regular contributions for a dozen different papers, and constant and unremitting applications to the magazines — which, by the way, at last I have most refreshing signs of conquering — having but just within the last two weeks

had two poems accepted by them — both trifles in their way, but yet enough to indicate that “the wind is no longer in the East,” as John Jarndyce would say. And for two or three months steadily I have been contributing to the *New York Sun* (Sunday issue), where I am meeting with a good eastern audience, and evidently pleasing, judging from the letters I have received from the editor, Mr. Chas. A. Dana, who evidently is very kindly disposed, and inclined to humor my vanity in the stubborn belief that I will ultimately win. Now, there! — that’s all I’ll say about my selfish self.

It was very good of you to gratify me with some outline of your own doings in the struggle of existence, and I was greatly interested in all you said, though I could but wish, with each line as I read, that I might be able to make your path a trifle smoother. But after all there’s nothing to do but take things as they come, and bear with cheerfulness all that seems sent to vex us and annoy. Sometimes the way is stony, and the path so choked with briars that our foot-

prints leave red stains along the dust; yet, thank God, the way has never been so dark — nor may be — but the Christ face may smile back upon us from beyond, and woo us on unto the final good. And with the best encouragement that I can give, I pin right here, the latest poem I have written for both our striving sakes.*

I'm a little troubled, too, thinking your erratic ramblings in search of the "Golden fleece" may keep this letter from your hands, for you never told me where I should direct it, and of course my only way will be to use the old address. So you must write me if you do receive it, for until I hear I will never rest quite contented — thinking you may think me even more neglectful than I really am.

And now I must close, — but first tell you it was queer that the poem you sent me, "What She Thought" has been a favorite of mine for years — not many, perhaps, yet I think a half dozen at the least — since its

*"The poem mentioned in the last line of third paragraph of letter of July 6th, 1880, was not preserved, and I have no recollection of the title." — From a signed statement by Elizabeth Brunn, *nee* Kahle.

first appearance in the magazine in which it first appeared. It is very beautiful and tender and pathetic — all that's lovable, and were the speaker but the opposite in sex, we would be counterparts in hopelessness, — since —

“Questioning thus, my days go on,
But never an answer comes to me;
All love's mysteries, sweet and strange,
Sealed away from my life must be.”

But like her, too, I have much to live and hope for, and after all, I'm not quite sure that all of this life's happiness depends upon just love. Not that I'm a cynic, but I have seen so many — Oh, so very many — dear friends that had been happier had they remained just friends and never wed each other. But it's a solemn thing to think of never having one's own home — but here I go again! — and I just aint goin' to think about it all just to make myself more and more miserable. I clasp the warm hand of my good girl and laugh along, forgetful of all gloomy things!

And as “Ever the best of friends, aint us Pip?”

J. W. RILEY

Indianapolis, Ind.,
Aug. 22, 1880.

Dear little friend: —

Your last letter has been neglected a long time — two weeks, I guess, but I just couldn't help myself, — being hurried, flurried, worried all the time. I should have liked much better to have answered at once with the influence of your words fresh upon me — for the letter was so very good and cheery like, although at times it had enough of sadness in it, too, to make it hurt a little. And I'm 'most afraid the little girl [is] often gloomier and more disconsolate than she would have me know! Well, well, — you must be strong, since after all, without strength there is very little in existence we could bear at best.

You're a queer little nomad, you are! and you can't settle down into that "garret of your own" any too soon, 'cause I am growing quite impatient to visit you, and will surely come some day when you least expect me. Last year I fondly hoped I might go capering down your way — lecturing — but

didn't get a call within hundreds of miles of you, and now this season I'm going to hope again, and if I don't get an engagement down that way, am at least going to try to save money enough out of it all to make a visit to you in the spring vacation. I have tolerably "hard lines" through the summer, because, although I write almost constantly, the pay as yet is anything but munificent, and besides I have so many demands beside my own to supply. The only thing left you or me to do is to make the best of what the gods so gingerly bestow. That's what *they all* have to do anyhow! Sometimes I'm foolish enough to envy those who have no end of leisure, wealth "and a' that," but am generally not long in discovering my mistake, for no matter who they be, they always have some source of misery that poverty alone knows nothing of, and is therefore by far the happier state.

You sent a little poem to me that sounded like you, 'cause it was "Tired" — as I know you were. Now, don't you deny it — for of course you *must* grow very weary of the dull old stupid "double-double toil and

trouble" sort of existence sometimes. It's natural, but you mustn't encourage such a feeling. God knows the best is bad enough, but it is simple duty for us to meet all things bravely, and with sunshine in our faces, though the storm raves in our hearts. God will recompense us yet for every ache of pain we undergo. And know, too, always that your own burden, however it may chafe and weigh you down, is but a feather's weight compared with thousands that are borne without a murmur but of gracious prayer and patient faith that God's ways, however strange to us, are always for the best.

The summer has been a very trying one for me. That is, it's been simply like every other summer, — only with less rest in it, — but I'm growing more and more content, I think, and willing to accept things, good and bad alike, with proper patience and appropriate thankfulness. I'm at least moving a little toward the far height I have fixed upon for [the] perch of my ambition.

Yesterday, I had the nicest letter imaginable from Ella Farman, editor of that

delightful Child's Magazine, *Wide Awake*. She likes a little poem I offered her, but must have a more appropriate verse by way of ending, etc., etc., and so I wrote as she directed, and am almost certain it will please her. It is a little jingle called "The Land of Used-to-Be," and you may keep an eye out for it, and when it appears, tell me what you think of it — though I know you'll like it.

And you asked me if I wrote a poem you saw, called "Delilah." Perhaps so. I wrote, about a year ago, a poem of that title, though there may be others of that same title better than mine.

Did the one you saw begin: —

I loved her, why I never knew —

Perhaps, because her face was fair;
Perhaps, because her eyes were blue,
And wore a weary air.

If so, I wrote it — and you must not be jealous, as you say, because poets, to interpret all things as their mission, must oftentimes be sorry dogs themselves. However,

I must not let you think that I ever have loved seriously visions only; one part of my life has been seriously scarred with dissipation — as I think I have often intimated to you, because I would never wilfully attempt the denial of any fact, however unpleasant the acknowledgment of it would be. You will know that I will be glad always of your friendship, and that mine for you is now as always, and God bless us every one!

J. W. RILEY

Indianapolis, Ind.,
Oct. 6, 1880.

Dear friend: —

And so you wonder if I have really *missed* you since you wrote last? Well, I really have, and what is more, I am growing more and more mystified over your strange ways all the time. Just a week or so since, the little picture came — the queer little “Crink-um-crankum” girl, which you have always

insisted is like you.* And you *are* a queer little "Crinkum-crankum" girl, sure enough; and, to be dead-honest now, *I'm glad you are*. I wouldn't give the snap of my thumb for just *ordinary* little girls. The world is full of them — and they, in consequence, are not *novel* — so, my dear little "Marchioness," I am werry proud o' you — werry proud indeed! But what I was going on to say, was — Here came the picture, and the briefest note saying for me not to write till I heard from you again — that you were

*"The little picture referred to in first paragraph of letter of October 6th, 1880, and designated as the 'little Crinkum-crankum girl,' was a small imitation burntwood of a little girl with sunbonnet, bearing the title 'Looking for Jimmy,' which I sent him at that time.

I might here explain that the constant allusions to my poverty came about from the fact that in my letters I misrepresented to him my real financial condition — which was, that while not rich, I enjoyed from my father a sufficient allowance to supply every ordinary want; but believing he would better appreciate me and my letters, I throughout the correspondence maintained the attitude of not absolute but near poverty, and having to live in meager quarters on a small income which I myself earned; this was in order that he himself, being poor, would believe me to be more sympathetic with his actual condition and aspirations.

The reference in latter part of first paragraph, to being 'on the wing,' and not to write until he heard from me again, came about through an ambition that grew out of my isolation at New Brighton, and a desire to do something in the world — which led to my going to Pittsburgh and working in the Fort Pitt Glass House, where they did china painting, in which I wished to perfect myself." — Signed statement by Elizabeth Brunn, *nee* Kahle.

“on the wing,” so to speak — as our dear old “Doctor Marigold” would say, —

“North and south, and west and east,
Winds liked best, and winds liked least;
Here and there and gone astray
Over the hills and far away.” —

And there was really no telling where you would anchor — or when. Now I thought *that* was odd — kindo piques a fellow like *me* to be told *not* to write, when I’m so used to being asked, nay even *coaxed* and pled with to do just the opposite — and by the very smilingest of all imaginable girls and the most *anxiousest* too! — not that I’m at all handsome, or even good-looking, but because— because— I hardly know why the silly things will act so — but they *do* act so, — and perhaps it is for that very indefinable reason that I — *don’t* write to them if there’s any possible way out of it — Now! — And I like this shabby little girl, *turning* her back toward me, and staring wistfully the *other way*, better than all the others, however daintily they dress and tilt their smirking faces up to mine. Fact is,

I am sure you are a good girl, though you *do* say you are not so good as I am. You can't say that, though, in anything like a convincing way to me, for I *know* you are worth a thousand of me, — God bless you!

Yes, I am truly glad you are back home again. I don't like to think of you out in the great coarse, rasping world. It's a horrible place to be, and a place, too, where we are apt to lose our gentler natures — and with every reason. And however poor your home is, always rest content with it, knowing that "To stay at home is best." —

"Stay, stay at home, my heart, and rest,
Home-keeping hearts are happiest.
O'er all that flutter their wings and fly
A hawk is hovering in the sky —
To stay at home is best."

And when I *do* come, — as I really am going to try very hard to do sometime, — I want to find you—At Home. Wish you might see *my* home — if for no other reason but that the contrast would make your own so much brighter — 'cause my home is in no wise even worthy of the name. It's the

place I never go to but when absolutely forced to by the fear that if I don't the outside world will know how really miserable a place it is. — But I must back to my adopted motto. —

“Whistle and hoe,
Sing as you go,
Shorten the row
By the songs you know!”

And you've got lots o' things to explain to me — eh? Well, as to that, you need explain nothing whatever, for I am almost certain that I know already everything you would have me — and I like you all the better for everything in your life.

But I am not at all a political sort o' fellow — as you suspect from the “Drum” poem. But I am at times a trifle patriotic. You guessed the right side, though, when you set me in among the *Garfield* guards. I take no open part whatever, but like the Republicans, simply, I think, because they helped God to liberate the slaves. That is the grand first principle.

I have sent you two or three papers recently, — to your old Pittsburgh address, — hope you'll get them, if you haven't already. I opened here some weeks ago to a fine audience, and I think among the papers sent you printed account of the success of it. I anticipate a more fortunate season than last, but of course may be disappointed. However, I shall not moan any more.

The magazine poems you say you have not seen — neither have I. They have not been published yet — though I look for them next month. One in *St. Nicholas*, and one in *Wide Awake*. The first is simply *non-sense jingle*, but the *Wide Awake* poem (the first of two that they accepted, called "The Land of Used-to-be"), I am sure you will like.

And now I must close. I would like to write more, but I just can't — I am so tangled. You will know I always *think* pages and pages more than I can tell you.

In your next you may tell me if you would like a very flattering lithograph of this plain face of mine, and if you do I will gladly send

it — even *it* is far from good-looking, but
it's got my tilt o' the head, and I'm vain of
that, and want you to see it.

As ever and always,

Your true friend,

J. W. RILEY

Indianapolis,

November 19, 1880.

My dear good friend: —

Your last letter is best of all letters — it
is, and I'd like to devote *hours* and *hours*
to the answer it deserves, but have only
seconds now at command, and brief ones
too.

I am preparing for the road again, and
with some promise of better success than
I met with last season. Fact is, I really
think I'm going to make a little money.
Want you to pray for me anyhow—'cause I
do so need it. I'm glad all the time that
you're *at home* — that's the place for little
girls, you know, and then, I might sometime
go way down there to see you, and it 'ud
be awful if you wasn't there—wouldn't it?

I just say these words to wedge in with the picture—and a thousand thanks for the space you reserve for it—God bless you and keep you smiling till I write. As ever,

J. W. R.

Indianapolis, Ind.,

March 15, 1881.

Dear friend Lizzie: —

I fear I have been really neglecting you a little, but you must know how selfish I am, and how feverish it makes me to be always striving after so much and attaining so little. This is all the word of excuse I will offer, and I know you'll understand.

And I'm very glad indeed to think you have missed me all this while. Truly, I think such friends as we have grown to be — so oddly, too, and never having seen each other — are quite as necessary to each other as they whose hands are often clasped, and who sit face to face so many happy times, forgetful of all things that ache and pain. But we must still go on, I guess, each wondering if the other is as we have pictured to

ourselves; and, if so, *longing* for, *at least* a sight — a word — a touch. Perhaps, dear little friend, this may be all the mutual joy God has intended for us. I often think so, and I often at such times try the comfort in the old lines of Lowell's — and you must speak them with me, with a trust so warm and bright that I will find it still unfading on your lips though I look not on your face till Heaven is ours: —

“Of all the myriad moods of mind
That through the soul come thronging,
Which one was e'er so dear, so kind,
So beautiful as *longing*?
The things we *long* for, *that we are*
For one transcendent moment
Before the Present, poor and bare,
Can make its sneering comment.

O would we know the heart's full scope
Which we are hourly wronging,
Our lives must climb from hope to hope
To realize our *longing*. —
To let the new life in, we know
Desire must ope the portal . . .
Perhaps the *longing* to be so
Helps make the soul immortal.” —

Anyway, we must be glad, whatever comes — whatever *stays away*. And, there,

now! that's enough of sorrowful speculation. So be glad with me — or, rather, *affect* to, and *compel* a gladness that with patient humoring, at last will learn to love you better all the time, and so abide with you through every ill. And to start out with, you must be glad to have me tell you that your letters are just the opposite from being “unendurably monotonous,” as, evidently, in one of your “horribly blue moods” you have been trying to persuade yourself. And however “*vain*” you may acknowledge yourself, I'm still vainer, don't you see? And I'm going to positively forbid your reading that misanthropic old Byron, whose dark foreboding, cheerless mutterings you sometimes quote to me; and, instead, *command* you to read my dear, rare, lovable Longfellow — who, however sad he gets, can always see a glorious promise somewhere on beyond.

I'm awful proud when you tell me of meeting those who know me “as my works have been,” and am sure I would like Mr. Douthitt as you so pleasantly describe him.

And here I am at the end of both my space

and time. Now will you just go on in fancy with all the other pages I would like to write to you — 'cause I *do* want to write many, many more. And I want you, too, to just go on with your drawing class — your home-work — or, as the funny man in the "Screaming Farce" would say, "Your domestic avocations" — only finding time to write me a little oftener than you do.

As ever and always, yours,

J. W. RILEY

Indianapolis,

June 23, 1881

Dear friend: —

Seems to me like ages since I have written to you, though I have not forgotten you for an hour in all that time. I have been very, very busy, and through much of the long silence have been fretted and worried beyond measure. Now, however, I am glad to tell you that all is untangling once more, and my ever-*promising* prospects are more promising than ever in my life before.

I am busy now, aside from the daily drudge-work I cannot escape, elaborating a scheme to get East the coming lecture season. May *not* succeed, but am almost assured that I will, and that, too, under the most flattering circumstances.

Do not expect a letter this time. I can at best but write a page or two, but you will know, for all that, that I do the very all-in-all in my power. Life and circumstance have not been very friendly toward me for a long, long while, but they are growing gentler, I believe, all the time; and so though not a *pampered* favorite of theirs by any means, I can but feel that I am slowly and surely ingratiating myself into their higher favor.

Is there anything newer to tell you? I am so ashamed at times writing to you of nothing but *myself* — *myself* — *Myself*! But you must forgive it all, since for years my hunger and ambition have made [me] think of little else. I want to succeed — I *must*. I could do such worlds of good if I were rich — and that good, too, that I positively *owe* to others.

The city here is very dull and stupid just now. It is dry and harsh and parched. There is no juice in it, and sometimes I absolutely stifle. Is it well with my little friend down there at her old home? You think it a dull place sometimes, and the old ache comes in your throat, I know — but bless you, little friend, the world is ten times worse, and it does jostle so! and O the thousand and one little mean treacheries one meets! To escape them and ride over them and trample them down — down — down where they belong, one must have the money-scepter in one's fist. Then be a king indeed.

Will you always think kindly of me? — True friends are so refreshing, being so rare. You are my true friend and I am yours — in fact — “*Ever the best of friends — aint us Pip?*” God bless you, and good-bye a little while.

As ever,

J. W. RILEY

I will copy my last poem on next page for you. —

BABY'S DYING

Baby's dying!
Do not stir:
Let her spirit lightly float
Through the sighing
Lips of her —
Still the murmur in the throat —
Let the moan of grief be curbed —
Baby must not be disturbed!

Baby's dying!
Do not stir:
Let her pure life lightly swim
Through the sighing
Lips of her —
Out from us and up to Him —
Let her leave us with that smile —
Kiss and miss her after while!

J. W. R.

June 22, '81.

Indianapolis, Ind.,

August 9, 1881.

Dear friend: —

Your last good letter has been neglected for more than a week. I wanted to write at once upon receipt of it, but could not possibly — I am so bothered and crowded every way. It seems that the further on in

life I get the greater my trials. This is not as it should be, for one so fondly hopes (and justly) that rest is somewhere on ahead, and to find no rest whatever, but instead still newer complications of tasks and trials is most pathetic and disheartening, — isn't it? In that particular I think our two experiences must bear quite a likeness — only your capacity of patience so exceeds my own that I look upon you enviously, and would most gladly exchange with you.

There is no new thing to tell you of, only that there is a faint hope of my getting East the coming season. I have just received word from the *Redpath Lyceum Bureau* that my name will be on their lists, and for me to at once prepare my circular, and send a circular containing my programme, press-nities [press notices?] and personal letters of favor and compliment from such celebrities as Governors, Senators, Authors, etc., as I may be able to interest in my behalf. These will be headed by one from Mr. Burdette, of the *Hawkeye*, who has already been of vast service to me, and of whose friendship I am assured for many reasons.

Of course I am anxious as to the result. In the meantime, I am forced to be at other work — not only verse-carpentering, but editorial work as well — this latter being more lucrative to me and satisfactory to the public, but very trying indeed, since I take no delight in it, but shrink from it with almost positive aversion.

I write hurriedly. I can do but this. When you told me you had scarce two letters from me in a long year's time, I felt justly rebuked; but, my dear friend, could you know my unfortunate temperament and surroundings I know you would forgive me without the asking.

God bless you and keep you always happy,
is the sincere prayer of

Your less fortunate friend,

J. W. RILEY

Indianapolis, Ind.,

September 10, 1881.

Dear friend of mine: —

I can write you, in answer to your long, good letter, but a few lines. Will you

understand? I am particularly busy, getting in readiness for the coming lecture season, — being, at last, nearing my ambition, and engaged by the *Redpath Lyceum Bureau*, Boston, sponsored by Robt. J. Burdette, “The *Hawkeye* Man.” — Soon I will forward you scheme of this season’s programme. Till I get a breathing space I can scarce hope to have a word for you. When any promise of success, be sure I will let you know. Everything with me is particularly flattering and I am feverish with impatience, *being starved* for so long!

This is but a word. You must interpret it. God bless you — me — all who so need it. As ever and always,

Your friend,

J. W. RILEY

P. S. — I am particularly engaged with humorous editorial matter, which seems to be taking well, and pays better than verse. Hence more of it now than the latter. I enclose specimen from today’s issue.

Indianapolis, Ind.,
December 13, 1881.

Dear friend: —

Won't you tell me where you are, and how you are, and what you are doing? Long ago you said, if I were silent for a long time you would know, without any explanation from me, that I was too busy, and *couldn't* write. I hope you have not forgotten, and I hope too that all this time you have been finding that excuse for me. I have been working very hard indeed, and am glad to tell you, as I think you will be glad to hear, that my more than ordinary industry is meeting with a more than ordinary reward. I have been devoting nearly all my time toward the lecture, and being now under management as above [Redpath Lyceum Bureau] and in splendid and ever-growing favor with the bureau, my prospects are very, very bright.

As yet, I have been filling Western engagements only, but leave for the East the latter part of this month, — my first engagement, — in all probability at Tremont Temple, Boston.

I have only time to tell you of my good fortune, and to enclose to you a gruesome little sketch that I happened upon not long ago while "on the road."

I will be particularly glad to have a word from you, and you must so gratify me. Address as always, and if not in the city here when it arrives, it will be forwarded to me.

As ever,

Your faithful friend,

J. W. RILEY

Indianapolis, Ind.,

Jan. 18, 1882.

Dear friend: —

Well — I have been East, conquered, and am back again, without the ghost of a chance to stop and see you on the way. I had hoped that I would have full leisure to find you, either going or coming, but being delayed in Boston some days, in order to avail myself of Club invitations, it so hurried me to make Western engagements, I hadn't a minute on the home-way when I started.

But I am to have other Eastern engagements, and will hope then to find the opportunity so long denied. Fact is, I am becoming just a trifle popular, and with a growing tendency in that direction. I can't write more now. I sent you papers. Did you get them? They will tell you all my successes, etc., etc.

As ever your friend,

J. W. RILEY

Greenfield, Ind.,

December 31, 1882.

Dear friend: —

I have forgotten nothing, as you seem to think, — only it seems the last year with me has been a long *numb* spell — an unending lethargy, — however I have tried to fancy it had any life in it, or one thrill of glory left. Your memory has been with me all the time — but I could do nothing to deserve it — feeling and knowing you were better without my friendship. Sometimes I feel sure I am good, but the sensation is a

Greenfield, Ind. Dec. 31, '82.

Dear friend:

I have forgotten nothing, as you seem to think, - only it seems the last year with ^{me} has been a long numb spell - an unending lethargy. However I have ~~tried~~ to fancy it had any life in it, or one thrill of glory left.

Your memory has been with me all the time - but I could do nothing to deserve it - feeling and knowing you were better without my friendship. Sometimes I feel sure I am good, but the sensation is a rare ^{one} and as years go by, it comes at longer intervals and stays for briefer spells - until, at last, I am left vainly crying, "Is there a way to

forget to think!" I am still meet-
ing with more and more success—
but that seems even more pitifully
pathetic than the old-time agony of
effort and hunger for it. What is
to become of it all I hardly care—
I am only stoically waiting for the
issue,

But I thank you more than I
can tell you for all your kindnesses
to me, and envy you for your
great bravery and patience. Your
character in my eyes stands level
with any heroine of History. God
loves you for it, and protects and
keeps you, as I pray He may for
all time from here to Heaven.

The beautiful vase came, but one
was broken—that one is me! The

rare one and as years go by it comes at longer intervals and stays for briefer spells — until, at last, I am left vainly crying, “Is there a way to forget to think!” I am still meeting with more and more success, but that seems even more pitilessly pathetic than the old-time agony of effort and hunger for it. What is to become of it all I hardly care — I am only stoically waiting for the issue *

But I thank you more than I can tell you for all your kindness to me, and envy you for your great bravery and patience. Your character in my eyes stands level with any heroine of History. God loves you for it, and protects and keeps you, as I pray He may for all time from here to Heaven.

The beautiful vases came, but one was broken — that one is me! The other is yourself, so it is very good to look upon, and I have brought it home, where all my best things are, together with your pictures — and they gladden all the gloom of the old home that needs them so. Soon I want to send something of like worth to you, but

*The dots appear in the MS., — nothing has been omitted.

when and where I will find it I cannot guess
— but must count on your patience again.

Day after *The New Year*, which I'm going
to try to love, I start for Ohio engagements
— Then for the East again; and, if ever I
can come, I'll come to New Brighton again.*

Hoping that the New Year may be as good
to you as you have been to me, I am as ever,

Your sincere friend,

J. W. RILEY

January, 1883.

A Happy New Year!

Dear Little Girl: —

Here on this glad New Year's Day comes
your beautiful gift. You are so very good
to me — so very, very good. I am all grati-
tude; but that doesn't half express my feel-
ings; and I fear I never can, as I would so
like to. God bless you always, and don't

*Mrs. Brunn (*nee* Kahle) says that sometime in 1882
Riley called on her, and that thereafter he made two more
calls, about a year apart. It may be inferred that at the first
meeting they were both more or less disillusioned, though
Riley's last letters are not without a tone of ardency, and he
seemed disinclined to break off their relationship. — ED.

let you die till I go on before to plan some sweet surprise for you that Heaven had never thought of without me.

I can only write this little page, but you will know how everything is hurrying me.

As ever your true friend,

J. W. RILEY

Indianapolis, Ind.,

February 10, 1883.

My dear friend: —

Your good letter meets me here, just as I am returning from the far West, and how glad I am to hear from you again! Now I can explain to you my long silence since last seeing you and promising to write. Your address, which I then took down in pencil hastily, I lost in some way, and never being able to find or recall it, I of course could not write — though over and over again I wanted to.

There was something indefinable in your manner (although you appeared quite happy and content) that somehow impressed me with the belief that you were neither happy nor pleased with the world or myself — and

I have so much wanted to write and try to make you cheerier. Now that your letter and address is here, I *can* speak to you again — though I cannot tell you with what great delight and eagerness. You're a noble, brave, good girl — the gentlest woman, and the truest friend, so you must try with me still to be hopeful and not believe the world as worthless as it sometimes seems.

Twice since I saw you last I have stopped in Pittsburgh — but how could I hope to find you? The disappointment made me very miserable, dear friend, and yet at the selfsame time you were doubtless thinking I was forgetting you. As your friendship is most loyal, so is mine. Always remember this — and that there is a God and a most merciful Father who loves His children all, I am assured, and you must believe with me. Of course we are *tried* here — so heavily burdened and bowed down that we must cry out sometimes, but always we may steal off in the dark and nestle our wet faces in our pillows, fancying we are once more leaning at the mother's knee, and that the dear

old tender face is still above us, and the warm sweet soothing hands are touching hair and brow, and bringing back the simple, childish faith inherited of her. God bless us and make us stronger in this glad belief. We must not be cast down. You have always seemed so patient — so steadfast — so abiding in your trust in the Good, that now it would be terrible to see you anything but just the same glad sermon of the woman that you are. And if you, now, will promise me to so strive to remain hopeful and strong and glad, I will answer your request, and promise you to give up the evil thing that has been killing me. Shall we not strike hands on this? *Yes!*

Your reference to your will touched me very deeply. You must not think me so helpless, my dear friend. You must not make *a child* of me like that. I bless you for your goodness, and the Christ-like kindness of your interest, but you must make me stronger — not weaker. May I come and see you soon? I will be going East again shortly, and would like so to *see* and *talk* with you. Write me that you are

happier and stronger, and the world is better and brighter all the time. As always,

Your true friend,

J. W. RILEY

Indianapolis, Ind.,

February 25, 1884.

Dear friend: —

Am home again for a brief time, but find no letter from you, as I had hoped to find in waiting. Why have you not written? Did you not get my last in prompt answer to yours mailed February 5th?

I have been, and still am, very busy, and now can't tell you how pleased I would be to hear some pleasant word of you. Please write me here — and, if away, it will be forwarded.

An after-dinner speech* — my very latest attempt at anything approaching the literary — I enclose, hoping, my dear friend, something in it will please you.

As ever,

J. W. RILEY

*Mrs. Brunn says she did not preserve this speech.

Greenfield, Ind.,
June 26, 1884.*

Dear friend: —

I have been quite ill, and am now little better, but improving. I am glad indeed to get your little "Grandma" letter, but can't tell by it whether you have moved *from* or *to* 568 Fifth Ave., [Pittsburgh] and have no letters of yours here that I may refer to, to put me right. This is to tell you only this, as I can only lie propped in bed and have nothing in my head anyhow but aches. I address and send this as I do knowing that whether old or new address, *Mrs. Matthews* will get it, and present to you.

By the time I hear your reply I think I will be real well again — then will write you something worthier. Never you think the sore-fingered grandboy forgets!

As ever, J. W. R.

*Mrs. Brunn states that this letter was received shortly after her marriage, and that she did not answer it. It was the last letter she ever received from Riley. — ED.

"The letter referred to in the first paragraph of this letter of June 26th as my little 'grandma' letter volunteered some advice respecting his one failing." — Signed statement by Elizabeth Brunn, *nee* Kahle.

P. S. — This I wrote weeks ago and thought I sent it to the office, but just now I find it here — “*I forget everything*,” I should have said, instead of ending other side as I did!

I do wonder if this will ever reach you. Someway I’m afraid not. I have “so much to do — so little done!” Almost ready to cry out. Time seems utterly stagnant — and my life and all, and everything! I go about and I write some, but always I am very tired and blue and hopeless. The sun shines, but *I* don’t. If you *do* get this, write to me *at once* and do something, if possible, to “chirk a fellow up!”

God bless you, my friend, and me, too!

As ever,

J. W. R.

Greenfield, Ind.,
June 26, 1884.

Mrs. Matthews: —

Having addressed our mutual friend, Miss Kahle, through your care on former occasions, and now being *uncertain* as to her

present place and number, I ask you to favor me by giving — or mailing to her — the enclosed note. By so doing you will place me under many obligations; and so hoping, I am,

Very respectfully yours,

JAS. W. RILEY

P. S. — If Miss Kahle is not with you, and her address unknown, will you favor me further by return of letter?

J. W. R.

APPENDIX

It will be remembered that in Riley's first poem written to Elizabeth Kahle (afterwards Mrs. Brunn) he stated that he had always known her, —

. . . . long before
God sprinkled stars upon the floor
Of Heaven and swept this soul of mine
So far beyond the reach of thine.

And those readers who believe in Spiritualism will perhaps be interested in the following statement by Mrs. Brunn: —

“When James Whitcomb Riley had been dead less than a year a seance was being held by Professor Pierre L. A. O. Keeler at the Boquet Street Spiritual Church, Oakland. I, being present, requested a message from James Whitcomb Riley, this message to be in verse, and the subject to be ‘After Death.’ I stated that I desired this verse to end a book which I then contemplated producing, using the letters I had

received from Riley as the ground work. To that request I received the following reply, written on a slate, but not in Riley's autograph: —

As you might picture an angel touching gently the harp strings at the throne, so do your sweet contemplations of me touch the harp strings of my soul, and put me in harmonious accord with all about me. I wish you were with me.

If possible come here Sunday night and I will give you through this medium a fitting verse with which to close 'After Death.'

JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY

A week later — on the succeeding Sunday night — the following lines entitled 'After Death', were given in the form of slate-writing [see facsimile], in Riley's own autograph, as follows: —

'Tis after death — the mortal struggle
done, —
'Tis after death — the new life just
begun, —
That rays effulgent from the Land of
Light

'Tis after death - the mortal struggle done -
'Tis after death - the new life just begun -
That rays effulgent from the Land of Light
Whose dawn never knows the shadows of a night,
Past distant Suns whose dreamy mists display
That winding belt we call the Milky Way,
Shoot down the starry depths to thy lone soul
And light its journey toward the onward goal,

James Whitcomb Riley.



Whose dawn ne'er knows the shadows
of a night,
Past distant suns whose dreamy mists
display
That winding belt we call the Milky
Way,
Shoot down the starry depths to thy
lone soul
And light its journey toward the on-
ward goal.

JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY

Later the following spirit message was received from Riley and was published in the *Progressive Thinker*, of February 9; 1918, in the Message Department, edited by Pierre L. O. A. Keeler: —

James Whitcomb Riley.— I am here today to take advantage of simply another way to extend pleasant thoughts to those on earth who are dear to me. Today I come from the heights of the supernal world to place at this sanctified shrine a kindly tribute of memory to a woman who in youth and maidenly beauty I loved as dearly as my own life. For this sweet soul my esteem, respect and affection have never faded. To know her is but to make one incline to the noble and lofty. Please

convey my tender thoughts to Mrs.
Elizabeth Brunn, of Pittsburgh, Pa.

About a year after the first message was received at the Oakland Church the following, written in pencil on the customary card that is placed within the slate for lead pencil messages, was transmitted through the same medium by whom the first slate readings were received, and read as follows: —

Dear One: Your tenderness of soul comes to me unmistakably. I have never ceased to think of you, and have seen you whenever there was a way to do so. The sentiment of my young heart I was at a loss to know how to analyze in those days back in the 'gone by.' Now I know they were the echoes of the lone shafts that fell upon me from your dear eyes and mind and heart and soul. I loved you more than I knew, and certainly more than you knew.

I am unable to locate the poem you spoke of, either in my memory or my surroundings. When you come over here, your mother will meet you first, then I will. We recognize by instinct, — intuition. Your own fertile brain that could conceive such a book as you

have arranged can think of a better title than I can.

I cannot think of anything I have left unsaid or undone. All you can do for my happiness is to keep on claiming me as your own. Your book seems to me complete. I rejoice that you wrote me, — remembered

Yours faithfully,

JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY

The statement in the foregoing in regard to the 'poem' was in reply to a request from me for the text of a poem entitled 'To a Poet,' which poem was sent him by me and was the means of beginning our acquaintance.

The next statement was in reply to a question as to how we should recognize our friends over there.

The next statement is in response to a declaration made by me of my intention to write a book about him, which was to contain the letters I had received from him.

The next communication of the spirit of Mr. Riley was received through Mr. Roy Holmyard, whose address is No. 5 Hedgerow Lane, Clifton, Cincinnati, Ohio, and

was made known to me through a letter, addressed to me by him, stating that at a certain seance the spirit of Riley had appeared, and among other things asked if any one present knew Mrs. Elizabeth Brunn, of Pittsburgh, Pa., and if there was not, to please communicate to her the following message: —

There are memories embalmed in the
love of the heart
Which live on while existence doth
run;
In the fondest of these hath my whole
life been part
Of the life of Elizabeth Brunn.

I think of no more evidential message than to write the above verse and to explain it by saying that in my youth I loved a young and beautiful girl whose image never faded, as did other fancies and forms and events, from my tender deceased heart and hope and soul. Mrs. Brunn still lives in Pittsburgh, Pa., on Lehigh Avenue, as existing evidence of the truth of my statement, which being a secret so far as the world knows, will be an evidence better than any I can give that this is from

JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY

In May, 1921, Professor Keeler transmitted to me a spirit writing in pencil in the autograph of James Whitcomb Riley, as follows: —

Fair spirit-mate mine —
Elizabeth Kahle —
Whose pure soul divine
Heaven's heights could scale,
Though a thousand names had been
added to thine,
And a thousand great men led a bridal
line, —
And a thousand new joys like the sun's
bright shine
Had fallen on thee,
Thou'd still be the one
Created for me
For Time's endless run.

Gentle one, you shall find a way in this 'after-land' to tell me much that even now I cannot divine. I am not reconciled to any thought, any bright anticipation, other than meeting you. Well said that this avenue seems to be the only satisfactory one for me to reach you. You cannot do for me, dear; it is for me to do for you! You cannot measure your earth stay. Don't psychologize yourself into passing soon. Earth denied us much; but heaven

has observed the shortcoming and will
right it.

Where and how shalt thou earliest
meet me?

What are the words you first will
say?

By what name hast thou learned to
greet me?

James, just now, — But that other
day?

With the self-same sunlight upon us,
I am waiting, dear love, somewhere,
He you would honor, he that you wish
for,

Thy king, thy loved one 'over there.'*

JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY

The signature on this card is identical
with that on the slate-message, and in
about the center there is a pencil drawing
of two hearts pierced by an arrow.

I hereby declare that the facts set out in
these pages are true to the best of my belief
and recollection; that the slate-writing is

*As to what, if any, part Riley's spirit took in dictating these
lines, or any of the preceding verses, is a question upon which
the opinions of readers may differ; but certainly all must agree
that he could hardly have written such mediocre verse while
in his mortal state. — ED.

the original, and the message was transmitted while the slate was being held in my hands; that the pencil message in Riley's autograph is as received; that the forty-four letters and their accompaniments are the originals received by me from James Whitcomb Riley; that they are in his autograph, and that they have been in my possession since their receipt; that none of them have ever been published, and that not more than ten people have ever read the originals.

MRS. ELIZABETH BRUNN
nee ELIZABETH KAHLE."

"Sworn to and subscribed before me this
25th day of August, 1921.

C. C. ALLEN,
Notary Public."

